

Monster Hunters Training Camp by Thandra

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Summary:

“I want you two to learn how to use a gun” she says, voice steadier than she thought “and I think I’ll start working out too, and maybe you should teach me how to throw a punch”. Jonathan looks at her in the eyes, with that intense seriousness he gets in life-and-death situations, and nods. Steve breaths out again, hands going through his hair, and nods too. “Okay” Steve says, raising his head and clearly trying to light his tone up “Monsters Hunters Training Camp, it is”.

1. Chapter 1

Jonathan Byers' s life changed a lot since his little brother got kidnapped by a monster from another dimension, even after they got him back and freed him from possession: he got to know Nancy Wheeler, fell in love with her; he started to cherish his family even more than he did before, spending as much time with his mother and little brother as he could; he learned that the world is way more complicated than he could imagine, and the lens of his camera can't protect him from it, no one can. The real changes though, the subtle ones that no one really notices, are the worst: his sleeping pattern aligned with nightmares the year before already, but fear stayed with him even when awake; he flinched to unexpected noises of any kind, clutching the lighter that is always in his pocket; he is not so comfortable being alone anymore.

Jonathan never minded being alone before, he used to enjoy the company of good music and maybe a nice book – alone never meant lonely for him. Now he buried his brother and then got him back, saw monsters in his house and human-shaped shadows in the woods, he saw his brother almost strangle his mother to death and black smoke emerge from his mouth: he never wants to be alone again. It was fear, pure crippling fear that never actually left him – not after the first time he saw the shadows, not after he fought them.

Nancy helps, a lot. She helps with her hand holding his, with her grounding presence when he gets lost in his thoughts, when she simply listens to him breathe on the phone at three in the morning; but what helps the most, is that she understands him. She knows as well as he does what it means to be scared of shadows, to almost panic when a light flickers. She fought monsters with him, and they won: he was alive and so was she, and Will, and mom, and all the kids. They are alive, but not the same: something in them, in their very core, shifted and morphed till they became people who could see what they have seen, fight what they have fought, and survived it. Now, they need to learn to live with it; but Jonathan doesn't have a clue how to.

Sometimes, she had problems recognising herself in the mirror. When she passed in front of it that morning for example – curly hair, jeans and grey jumper; nothing different from the usual – she did a double take. It was weird to see how ordinary, how *unchanged* she looked: she looked exactly like she did more than an year ago, but she wasn't that girl anymore.

That girl didn't know how a gun weighted in her hand, she thought nightmares could not touch you, she had *Barb*. Nancy Wheeler sleeps with a gun under her pillow; checks for light flickers and weird noises around the house every night, because she knows something could be coming for them; she spends her days with Jonathan Byers, because he gets her. *"This isn't you"* Barb had told her, the last time Nancy saw her - how right she turned out to be: Nancy hasn't been that girl since that night.

Nancy walks through the school corridors slowly, trying to take her mind off of her issues for the next few hours; she isn't going to let what happened rule her life, even if she isn't sure how to get over it. She closes her locker and sees something that, weirdly enough, she didn't expect: Steve. She doesn't know how she hasn't seen him before actually, it's been weeks till all that shit went down, and Mike said that he had been hanging out with Dustin a lot – *she knows how, she feels guilty for how she treated him, but isn't ready to face it yet.*

"Hey" Nancy was so lost in her had that missed him getting closer, but Jonathan's voice doesn't startle her. "Hey" Nancy slips her hand in his, and a smile appears on her lips as soon as she sees him blush a little. Jonathan makes her smile every day, even if she can feel the weight of what they went through on both of their shoulders.

"Everything okay?". Nancy almost sighs; Jonathan can read her like an open book, always has. "I saw Steve". Jonathan doesn't tense up, doesn't look jealous in the slightest; he actually looks at her, understanding in his eyes, and nods. "You're worried about him". And really, it should freak her out that he doesn't even have to ask – and it kind of does, but not because he knows her so well. He looks too calm for the topic at hand, they are *together* now: her worrying about

her ex would be a little more of a tense affair with anyone else, she thinks, but not with Jonathan Byers.

"I am" she says, because she is glad they can apparently talk about it "he is always alone, and what happened with Billy Hargrove can't be making things easier for him, and he just". Nancy's choked up, she closes her eyes for a second: she is not ready for this, she didn't even know she was that worried. Jonathan squeezes her hand tighter, making her breath easier in a second. "Will says he hangs out with them". Nancy looks at him immediately, silently surprised but scared to ask. "he drives them around a lot, apparently".

Nancy wishes that could make her feel better, that he still has some kind of contact with people who at least have an idea of what he is going through; but it actually makes it worse: she left him alone, after he protected her little brother and his friends and fought monsters with them. Jonathan's thumb caresses the back of her hand, soothing in a way that amazes her every time – Jonathan once said that he didn't always like to talk to people, Nancy now knows that he is actually fluent in silent affection: his little gestures and small touches spoke louder than any word.

"You should talk to him". Jonathan's voice is steady, and he looks concerned – it takes a minute for her to get it: he is worried about Steve, too. "He can't even talk to his parents, he can't rely on a bunch of kids only" he looks embarrassed, like he didn't expect to get caught "I think he could use a friend right now".

Nancy stops walking, and looks at Jonathan: she has to be absolutely sure of what he is saying, of why is he encouraging her to patch up her relationship with her ex. "You're telling me that I should go and try to become my ex-boyfriend's best friend?" she is looking at him dead in the eyes, demanding truth. Jonathan sighs, shakes his head. "It's bigger than that" the look in his eyes - serious, sad, resigned - almost scares her "a lot happened. A lot of between-life-and-death situations happened, to him: I think he could use someone to talk to".

And suddenly Nancy gets it; and again, it shouldn't really surprise her: Jonathan looks worried, because he is worried. He told her once that he preferred to look at people, to search for what they are trying to hide even to themselves. Jonathan looking at Steve, trying to

understand if he is actually doing well and not just pretending to, is like a punch in the guts: she has been trying to avoid even thinking about Steve, even if it was obvious for her that he wasn't okay at all. Jonathan, and she can't stop herself from smiling, is so much of a better person than she is: she has to do something, no more room for fake ignorance.

“Okay” she says, nodding more at herself than to him “I’ll talk to him, if you’re sure you’re okay with it”. Jonathan smiles at her, and kisses her forehead; “I am” he says, still smiling but trying to hide it. Nancy smiles too, she is not the girl who runs anymore.

Steve is exhausted, his bones feel heavy and his head is spinning; it seems like he will be able to fall asleep tonight, at least till a nightmare wakes him up - *either about monsters, Billy Hargrove or kids screaming too far out of reach*. He gets out of his car, headed to the front door of the Harrington’s house – a house too big and far to lonely, where a girl disappeared out of thin air more than an year ago.

But she didn't disappear, she was taken and killed by a monster from another dimension. Steve acknowledged it – all of it: the existence monsters, the sudden death of someone he actually met, the real dangers he never thought he'd have to fight – just some time ago, probably when he found himself risking his life for a bunch of kids. Dustin, and Lucas, and Max, and Mike, all of them really: he would die to protect them, he almost did already. Just then he accepted that Nancy had been right, *it was all bullshit*: living, trying to ignore something like real life monsters, pretending like nothing really happened, was total bullshit. He couldn't ignore any of it anymore, even if he wanted to: he had scars on his body and mind to prove that it did happen, and he wasn't going to forget it. So he spends time with the kids, hearing them laugh and play, and tries to remember that they are all alive and well; and he works out, an awful lot, because he needs to be ready when the next monster appears - his bat is always in his car, and his fingers hitch for it when it’s not near

him.

He is getting inside, when the familiar noise of a car getting closer stops him in his tracks; Nancy Wheeler, as beautiful as ever with her curly hair and the eyes of a warrior, steps out of it. Steve is surprised, but most of all concerned: the only reason Nancy will be looking for him, *after his shitty boyfriend performance that had her run in another boy's arms*, is trouble – he already told her, that night when the world was falling apart around them, that he was okay with whatever was obviously happening between her and Jonathan. “What happened?” he asks, his voice sounding way too panicked even to his own ears. “Nothing” she says, looking more than a bit anxious “Really, nothing happened. I just, I wanted to talk to you”.

Steve doesn't know how to answer to that, but a part of him wants to snap at her: he gets now, that they broke up mainly because he didn't want to face what happened the year before, and he understands why she turned to Jonathan; but it's been three weeks since that night - the one with monsters, and kids, and Billy – and he knew she was avoiding him. He wouldn't have minded, he planned on giving her and Byers some time alone anyway - *since even imagining them together makes his stomach turn upside down and his eyes water a little bit, he doesn't have much of a choice actually*. But she was avoiding him completely, not home when he dropped Dustin to her house and running across corridors to get to class, and that hurt. It hurt a lot.

“About?”. His tone is a bit snappish, but also kind of sad; and he hates himself for not being able to cover that up, he is used to not hiding anything from her. “Steve”. Her voice sounds sad too, and a bit desperate; her eyes look even bigger, and watery too – Steve almost reaches for her, to comfort her; he really is an idiot. “I know, I'm sorry” she is biting her lips, like she does when she is going to say something difficult “I miss you”. Steve hears his heart speed up, ready to burst out of his chest – he loves her so much it hurts, he really hates it. “What?” he says, and this time he sounds angry, at least.

Nancy breaths in deeply and closes her eyes, when she opens them again Steve sees the same determination she had when she pointed a gun at him. “We never really talked about us”. Steve's heart sinks, he doesn't want to talk about it. “No, you need to hear this”. Steve

swallows, and prepares himself: Nancy Wheeler is seconds from breaking his heart all over again, and she is determined too - Steve can take it, he can. "You weren't a shitty boyfriend". Steve's heart jumps, shocked. "You were really not, I was just really not over Barb. And pretending life was back to normal was killing me, and Mike was a mess, and I couldn't take it anymore". Her voice breaks on the last words, she breathes in trying to steady herself. "I wasn't okay, and I took it out on you" she is looking at him straight in the eyes, probably to prove him she is not lying "I'm sorry I hurt you, I'm sorry for a lot of things I can't take back; but you were good, we were good, and I don't want you out of my life".

Steve may or may not feel like crying, he loves Nancy Wheeler. Truth is, Steve is lonely: he doesn't have friends anymore, not even shitty ones; after the first monster hunt he had Nancy, but now she is with Jonathan. The kids are the only human contact he has lately, and even if he could try to talk with someone at school, he doesn't want to; he could never actually talk to them, so what is the point? Nancy broke his heart, but he really doesn't want her out of his life; that's why her avoiding him hurts so much.

"I miss you, too" he says, and Nancy hugs him. She is holding him tightly, and she feels familiar in his arms - he feels like he is breathing for the first time after weeks of apnoea, like maybe everything is not that shitty. He steps away from her seconds later, it sucks; but she is with Jonathan now, and he is not that much of an asshole. "So, friends?". He makes his tone lighter, and displays his best charming smile; he is actually surprised he doesn't have to fake it much, since he is talking to his ex-girlfriend, that he still loves very much, about being just friends with her.

"Please" she answers, nodding slowly; her face is so relived and her smile so bright he is almost blinded by them. He smiles back at her. "Okay, then" she says, walking backwards towards her car "see you at school?". He nods, still smiling. "See you tomorrow, Wheeler" he says, with a two fingers salute. Her little laugh still rings in his ears as she goes away, Steve is still looking at the road and honesty feels every bit the idiot he is.

He still is exhausted, and he is sure nightmares won't leave him alone tonight either; but he feels better. He accepted that in this world kids

have to fight monsters, that blinking lights mean more danger than anyone could imagine, that people like Billy can make it all worse; but Nancy is in this world too, and Nancy will always be something good for Steve. He accepted that his world actually changed the moment he stepped in the Byers' house to apologize to Jonathan and found a warzone, and it won't go back to how it was before no matter how much Steve wants it to; but maybe, in this distorted and confusing world, he is not alone.

Jonathan is late; lessons finished a while ago, but he got lost in the timeless calm of the darkroom. It surprised him in the beginning, how the darkroom – silent, full of shadows, and where he was mostly always alone – didn't scare him. But for some reason, while his own room sometimes felt scarier than hell and the woods were made of actual nightmares, the darkroom felt outside of it all – like for some reason the apocalypse hadn't reached that part of the universe, like the madness didn't touch that part of his mind. He didn't understand it, but he was incredibly glad for it.

He steps out of the school building, wind hitting him in the face badly, and he sees them: Nancy is leaning against his car, a little smile on her face and her eyes bright with amusement; and Steve is standing beside her, sunglasses on and a cigarette between his lips. Jonathan's fingers hitch for his camera, he is reaching for it already when Nancy sees him. She smiles at him, and puts an hand on her hip and bends a knee, leaning onto his car a bit more; Jonathan can't stop a silent laugh, she is posing for him.

He is raises the camera and clicks once, the world always seemed clearer from behind the camera. *Second click: Steve is in focus next to Nancy, stiff and surprised. Third: Nancy is looking at Steve, fond and glad; Steve looks back, fond but worried. Fourth: Steve body moves like he wants to run away, Nancy's like she wants to lean in. Fifth: Nancy grabs Steve's shoulder and pulls him close, Steve lets a smile escape.* Jonathan lowers the camera, he is smiling too.

Jonathan knows he should feel jealous watching them interact, they had been together for an year and Nancy obviously still cares about him; but he really isn't. Not because he doesn't feel threatened by Steve: he knows that a guy like Steve could have any girl he wanted, while for Jonathan it still felt unreal that Nancy wanted him. But Steve was not like that, at least not anymore – and a part of him knows that he actually never was, that he is a good guy: that he broke his camera because he deserved it, and brought him a new one after to apologize for what he said in that hallway; that he came back to a house with death in it to save their life, and fought monsters again and again to protect kids he barely knew; that he loves Nancy, and would never hurt her intentionally, not even after they broke up.

Jonathan should feel jealous, and worried, and anxious – but he doesn't. Because Nancy smiles and her smile is less stained, less pained. She never faked a smile for him, and Jonathan will never let her; but he can see she is better now, that having Steve beside her makes her relax a bit more. She takes his hand before he fully reaches her, tugging him playfully. “Hey” she says, in that way that he knows means she is amused by him “good photos?”. Jonathan blushes, because he still loves taking photos of her, even after what happened the year before – Nancy laughs a bit and tugs him even closer, kissing the side of his jaw; making him blush even more. He is still getting used to casual touches, kisses in public are uncharted territory; and really, even if he really wanted to kiss her, doing it in front of Steve is an asshole move he doesn't want to make.

“Come on! We even posed for you, it can't be that bad!”. She may be teasing him, but her voice is lighter than he ever heard and her smile is as bright as real; he feels almost giddy, her happiness is a drug. “It's not” he says, eyes down and still blushing “but you probably ruined Steve's bad-boy image in the last one”. He doesn't know why he said it, probably because he knew it would make Nancy smile like that – and Steve, unexpectedly, is smiling too.

Steve looks at him, shrugs and theatrically moves his sunglasses on top of his ridiculously tall hair; “I always preferred Charmer, anyway” he says, even puffing smoke out of his mouth. Nancy laughs loudly; and the scene couldn't have been more over the top, so Jonathan can't help but laugh too. Steve leans on the car with them,

still smiling; and Nancy raises her head to the sky, a smile silent like a whisper on her lips.

The subtle change – *that something that will shift and morph, in their very core, till they became not only people who have seen monsters and survived it; but people that live, and laugh, and love* – goes unnoticed; the only thing that Jonathan knows, it's that he never felt less alone.

Notes for the Chapter:

I started writing this because I couldn't have enough of Jonathan/Nancy/Steve, and once I started I couldn't stop: their dynamic is incredibly fascinating, in both canon and fiction (the Stoncy fandom is rich with writers, and I love all of them). I kind of wrote a lot, so this will have more chapters; still, it's the first time I write for this fandom: comments are always appreciated (if you find any errors or mistakes, feel free to point them out to me).

2. Chapter 2

Steve is, at five in the morning, when the sun doesn't seem to be shining properly yet, running. Working out – running every day for at least an hour, doing push ups and sit ups in for another – helps. It made him tired enough to fall asleep in the evenings, without his head having the chance to fuck him up; and it helped him to feel like he was doing something, like he was working not to feel as hopeless as he does now, next time monsters appear. He runs in the area around his house, but religiously next to the roads; the woods still feel unsafe for him, probably always will. When he sees Jonathan, standing in the middle of the silent pathway with the camera pointed to the woods.

The Byers' house is geographically pretty close to his own, but between them there's the woods; Steve realizes he must have been running for a while, if the intricate web of paths brought him there. Jonathan sees him, just when he was starting to debate with himself about what to say – or if he should just turn around and go away, he is pretty sure he never talked to Jonathan without Nancy being there too; and even those are just a few.

“Hey”. Jonathan looks surprised for a second, but then he settles on that expression that Steve can't read at all. “Hey” Steve is standing near him now, since talking from the opposite sides of the road seemed way too awkward “up early?”. Steve used to be the best at small talk, and he doesn't think he lost that particular talent; then again, Jonathan Byers could be the poster boy for avoiding social interaction of that sort. And in fact, he just shrugs – Steve thinks, a bit bitterly, that *they couldn't be more different*.

“You know” Jonathan says, eyes glued to the woods “nightmares”. And yes, Steve knows quite a bit on that topic – he is beyond surprised that Jonathan is talking about them, to him. “Yeah” he says, trying to get out of his stupor “only reason to work out this early in the morning, really”. Steve hates it, it may help but he hates it: he used to be as far from a morning person as you could be, now his psych wakes him up around five every morning; he used to love going to bed late and waking up even later, no more of that for him.

"Not much of a morning person, are you?". Jonathan Byers has a thing for being unpredictable, Steve decides: from the strength he displayed beating the crap out of him that time; to actually talking to him right now, reading his expressions like most of his alleged friends never could. "Not at all" he says, with a smile that he didn't expect, but can't stop either "sleeping used to be one of my favourite hobbies, living on exhaustion sleep and impromptu naps on school desks isn't my thing". Jonathan gives away a shy smile, almost imperceptible, and looks at him. "So you run for hours to make sure you'll fall asleep at one point or another?". And okay, Steve knows it's not an healthy way to cope with nightmares induced insomnia; but that's all he has – and Jonathan is still smiling, and even looking at him; Steve doesn't think he is judging him. "Mostly" he says, shrugging "I add sit ups and push ups, want be able to swing the bat, next time monsters decide to knock at our door".

Jonathan's eyes widen for a second, and Steve would actually pay to be able to read him in that moment – he looks surprised, and somewhere between angry and sad maybe, and then surprised again. "That's" he says, stopping for a second and then starting again "that's a really good idea".

And Steve gets, suddenly, that he keeps being surprised by Jonathan because – despite having fought monsters together and having lost the love of his life to him; *and yes, that hurts* – he doesn't really know the guy. But, *maybe*, he wouldn't mind getting to know him. "You could join me" he says, realising how much he means the words just as they come out of his mouth "unless this morning is a once in a lifetime thing, and you actually aren't a morning person either". Jonathan looks shocked, but then he smiles – a little brighter then before, Steve thinks this one actually reaches his eyes. "You can't exactly call it morning, sunrise maybe" Jonathan shakes his head, looking more relaxed then Steve has ever seen him in his presence "definitely more night, than day". Steve is smiling, even if he doesn't know why exactly, as he starts running backwards toward his house direction. "Sleep is for the dead, after all" he says, sounding suddenly more serious then he was feeling. Jonathan turns toward him with all his body, his unreadable expression on his face; and Steve almost stops on his tracks, the tension hitting him like a well placed punch. "I'll think about it" he says, so quietly Steve shouldn't have been able

to hear him. He nods at him, and turns around.

Steve is almost sure he lost something – some kind of hidden meaning behind their conversation, something heavier than sleep patters and working out; *something more similar to surviving death and fighting shadows* – but he doesn't feel like duelling on it now: he is on his way to an hour more of straining work out, and he still has to get to his permanently empty house without actually stepping into the woods; but, for reasons unknown even to himself, *he is smiling*.

For Jonathan eating in the cafeteria at school always seemed like an unnecessary danger, the quietness of darkroom always seemed like a way safer bet; but now, with Nancy beside him and most people choosing he wasn't worth messing with – he doesn't exactly get why, but either his brother apparent raise from the dead or the way Steve's face looked after they had that fight, seemed to have discouraged eventual persecutors – it didn't feel as threatening as it used to.

Nancy leads him to where Steve is already sitting, the table closer to the entrance, on the edge of his sit; and plops in front of him, still holding Jonathan's hand. "Good morning" she says, sounding calm and relaxed, in a way that Jonathan wants her to always be. "Hey" Steve answers with less enthusiasm, but with a relived smile of his own; then he looks at him, smile changing in a more tentative one, and "hey" he says. Jonathan can't help but smile at that, probably wider than he wants it to be. "Had any impromptu naps, yet?". Steve's eyes widen, and then he laughs a bit; Nancy looks at him with a look equally fond and surprised – he is glad he didn't stop himself from teasing Steve, it was really worth it. "Not yet" Steve answers, still smiling while biting on his lunch "but the day is still young".

"Okay" Nancy says, clearly amused and a little bit intrigued "what did I miss?". She can't seem to be able to fight the smile off of her lips, Jonathan never wants her to be able to again. "Nothing much" he says, unwrapping his sandwich "Steve was running behind my house before sunrise, nothing special". Nancy looks at Steve, curious

and a bit worried maybe; Steve rolls his eyes, gulping down some water. “Dude” he says, and Jonathan almost can’t believe he is addressing him that casually “It was almost six already, that is close to a reasonable hour, more or less”. Jonathan raises an eyebrow at him, looking directly at him for the first time since he sat down “you don’t really mean that”. Steve laughs again, still quietly and almost surprised, and “I really don’t” he says.

“Oh, great” Nancy says, rising an eyebrow in mock annoyance “of course, you’re both lazy asses”. “Leave it, Wheeler” Steve says, looking amused and contempt “we can’t all be workaholic overachievers in all honors courses”. Jonathan suppresses a laugh, but a choked grunt escapes him anyway; “God, no” he says, but with his eyes locked to his sandwich “all that study would kill me”. Nancy hits him lightly on the arm, making him look up at her. “Oh, shut up” she is looking at him straight in the eyes, Jonathan will never be able to look away from her “you have straight A’s, you can’t tell me that happened magically”. Nancy sounds proud, Jonathan blushes and his heart swells up a bit – he’s not used to having someone, who isn’t his mom or Will, being proud of him; or knowing what marks he has at all.

“Actually” she says, straightening her back and frowning in concentration “I’m thinking about taking a day off, that chemistry project is slowly killing me”. “Wow” is Steve’s only response, with his eyebrows raised almost to his hairline and his eyes comically wide. “I was thinking about a movie, maybe on the kids’ D&D night, since they are so loud my study gets disturbed anyway”. “Sure” Jonathan says, he looks at Steve automatically and finds him staring intently at his lunch.

“Steve?” Nancy asks, and Steve looks up slowly; looking pained and uncomfortable – he probably thought Nancy was inviting just Jonathan, like on a date; he should know better, he knows Nancy enough to know she would never flaunt something like that in his face. “Don’t tell me you’re actually planning to join the kids?” he says, looking at Steve – teasing him is the only thing Jonathan can find to make him understand that he is included in this. “No way” Steve answers immediately, his face still looking quite troubled “that shit is way too complicated to be entertaining”. Nancy smiles, but she

looks a bit worried “So, you’re in?”.

Steve looks at her dead in the eyes, then in Jonathan’s – and he has to do his best not to look away from him, suddenly feeling intimidated. “Are you sure you want me there?” he asks. Nancy frowns, like she doesn’t really get Steve – Jonathan knows she does, but she doesn’t want to make Steve feel like an intruder. “Of course I am!” she says, sounding a bit exasperated even; Steve looks at him, and he answers before he even realizes “sure”.

“Okay” Steve says, even if he doesn’t look completely sold yet. “So” Nancy says, sounding more relaxed already “six o’ clock, my place? Bring a movie if you want to escape my brother’s nerd collection”. Jonathan smiles at that and nods “I’ll bring Will, too”; he looks at Steve for a second “You’re giving Dustin a lift?”. Steve laughs at that, shaking his head with a fond smile on his face. “And Lucas, and Max” he says, in mock annoyance “I feel like I’m their chauffeur these days, and I don’t even get paid”. Steve has a fondness in his eyes, a quiet amusement, that Jonathan thinks is related more to the kids than their plans – but he said yes and Nancy looks pleased, he’ll take what he can get. Nancy relaxes in her seat, taking Jonathan’s hand under the table and squeezing it tightly for a second; Jonathan smiles, unable to stop himself.

Nancy opens the door smiling brightly, almost jumping on her heels; she has been in a delightfully good mood since she patched things up with Steve, but seeing him and Jonathan actually interact with each other improved her mood even more. “Hey” Jonathan has an hand on Will’s shoulder, but he looks comfortable enough; “Hi, Nancy” Will still looks pale, and definitely too thin – but he is alive, and Nancy can’t help but smile every time she sees him. She remembers him sweating and crying in pain in that little bed, too weak to move after a monster made of smoke came out of his body; she remembers Jonathan shaking in fear, crying desperately.

“Hey, guys” she leaves the door ajar, making room for them “Mike is

already in the basement". Will runs to the stairs in a flash, and Jonathan's smile gets a little brighter - Nancy recognizes that smile: sometimes she catches herself giving it to Mike, like she can't believe he started smiling again. She puts an hand on Jonathan's shoulder, and kisses him lightly; she can feel him smile against her lips, and can't help kissing him again – she can never have enough of him, she could kiss Jonathan Byers all her life and it still wouldn't be enough. "You already made popcorn?" he is blushing a bit, eyes silently checking around; Nancy almost laughs, Jonathan's shyness amuses her incredibly. "For us, and for the kids" she brings the bowls to the couch, swinging her hips a bit more then usual "I haven't picked the movie yet". Jonathan is getting rid of his jacket and shoes, when the doorbell rings again; Nancy beams, actually jumping a bit.

She barely sees Dustin, Max ad Lucas as they run to the basement, as soon as she opens the door; "Dipshits!" Steve shouts after them "at least say hi!". Dustin's head pops trough the door "Hi, Nancy! You look as beautiful as ever, are there any snacks?" he shouts too, smiling widely. Nancy laughs, shaking her head "I'll bring them in a minute". "Thanks!" Dustin shouts, and disappears again. Nancy turns to Steve who is still at the door, fidgeting in a way she has never seen him do - she knows it must be more than a little bit uncomfortable for Steve, to see her and Jonathan together; even if she was doing her best not to be too affectionate in front of him, and Jonathan isn't one for PDA anyway. "Come on" she says, already walking into the living room "we still have to choose the movie". Steve follows her seconds after: Jonathan is sitting on the floor in front of her, going trough the movies she owns.

"Tell me you don't want to watch Grease either" he says, looking up at Steve – she stopped being surprised by Jonathan's lack of jealousy, but how welcoming he is with Steve is another thing altogether: shy, closed off Jonathan seemed to have reached an understanding with it all she doesn't know about. She'll ask him about it soon, but she just wants to enjoy it for now. "It's not that bad" Steve says, making Nancy laugh. "Steve has a thing for musicals" Nancy teases, and Steve glares jokingly at her; "Please" Jonathan grunts, shacking his head with mock desperation "don't". "Everybody likes some good moves" Steve says, finally sitting down with them "but I can accept Saturday Night Fever, too". Jonathan honest to god glares at him,

and Nancy can't help a laugh from escaping; Jonathan is such a snob about music, he looks like Steve's taste is a personal attack to his persona.

"Okay" she says, barely able to talk without laughing again "Rocky?". They look at her – *and for a moment her stomachs drops and turns, both Steve and Jonathan's eyes on her making her feel something she doesn't know how to place* – and nod. "I can go with that" Jonathan says, "As long as it's not Ghostbusters" Steve concedes.

Nancy sets the movie and reaches for the popcorn, they stay on the floor while the credits start, when the lights flicker for a second. Nancy tenses immediately, and feels Jonathan and Steve freeze too - *it's nothing, it has to be nothing*. The lights flicker again and then the power gives out completely; "the bat is in my car" Steve sounds as panicked as she feels and she hears the kids moving into the basement. "I pick the gun and go to the kids, you two take the bat and check the meter on the back". Nancy is shaking, she stands up releasing their hands – she didn't even remember grasping them, *both of them*; she blames it on fear. "I'm sure it's just a power outage" she sees them try to relax, but it's is working for them as much as on her; not at all. "Anything happens, just shout" Steve says, looking terrified; "shoot first, we'll get to you" Jonathan is just as tense.

"Guys!" she shouts to the kids, as Steve and Jonathan step outside "everything okay down there?". And it's probably nothing, because Eleven closed the gate and the monsters are gone; but her mind doesn't let her believe that. "We're okay, we've got flashlights!" Dustin's voice makes her relax a bit, she tucks the gun in the back of her pants and goes for the stairs. "It's just me, Steve and Jonathan are checking the meter" she says while walking the stairs; she sees the kids and relaxes even more. It's dark, but the flashlights help, and they look pretty unfazed considering; Will looks paler than he did before, but Mike seems to be taking care of that. The power comes back and "Nancy?" she hears Steve shout, they all let out their breath at the same time; she doesn't like knowing her kid brother and his friends are just as winded up as she is. "I'm here! Everything's okay!" she shouts back; she looks at the kids one last time, nodding at Mike as to check with him, and climbs back up the stairs.

"They're okay?" and "Will?" the guys ask at the same time, Nancy

smiles. "They're okay, they had flashlights; Will seemed a bit freaked out, but I think putting attention to it would be worse". Steve lets out an heavy breath, laying the bat against the couch; Jonathan nods, a bit uncertainly. Steve goes to the couch and sprawls on it, his hand going to the bat as soon as he left it; Nancy is still high on fear adrenaline, she takes Jonathan's hand and sits them on the couch too, with her in the middle. They sit there in silence for what it seem like a lifetime, still trying to convince their minds that there's no imminent threat.

"I'm joining you" Jonathan breaks the silence, she knows he is talking to Steve even if he is not looking at him. Steve turns his head towards him, sitting up and putting his elbows on his knees; his eyes are scared, hunted. "I want to be ready, next time monsters come knocking at our door" Jonathan continues, turning to look at Steve in the eyes. Understanding passes between them, but it's something Nancy gets almost too well: she is been hitching, too. She is been desperately trying to find something, anything, that could make her stop being afraid; something more than clutching at her gun in the middle of the night, and reading physics studies on parallels dimensions.

"I want you two to learn how to use a gun" she says, voice steadier than she thought "and I think I'll start working out too, and maybe you should teach me how to throw a punch". Jonathan looks at her in the eyes, with that intense seriousness he gets in life-and-death situations, and nods; Steve breaths out again, hands going through his hair, and nods too. "Okay" Steve say, raising his head and clearly trying to light his tone up "Monsters Hunters Training Camp, it is". "Tomorrow is Saturday" Nancy feels suddenly impatient, like this is something they should have done as soon as they found out monsters were real but put it off. "At the clearing at six?" she asks them both, and then turns to look at Jonathan "You bring Steve, I bring the guns?". Jonathan laughs, Steve puts a hand on his chest in mock offence; Nancy simply rolls her eyes, an amused smile on her face. "Just because you don't know where it is" she turns to Steve; he finally looks relaxed, his smile real "Idiot".

Nancy puts the movie on again, and settles back on the couch; Jonathan's hand in hers and Steve's knees brushing hers on the little

couch - Nobody seems uncomfortable with the setting, breathtaking fear makes the awkwardness of their sentimental situation seem silly. Nancy breathes in deeply: she can hear the kids playing downstairs, the tension is finally leaving her body, Jonathan and Steve are beside her – *that, something that she doesn't know how to place, is making her stomach drop and turn again*; but it's not unpleasant, so she can forget it for now . Nancy smiles: next time monsters knock at their door, they'll be ready.

They get at the clearing fifteen minutes after six, Steve has been going between adrenaline rushes since the night before; seeing Jonathan's car in his driveway this morning, knowing they were going to meet Nancy in a bit, made him even more jumpy. He expected the night before to go a lot differently than it did: either so awkward and painful that he fled; or he did something stupid, and Jonathan punched him – or Nancy pointed a gun at his head, again. The black out – *just an ordinary black out, nothing dangerous about it at all* – made him forget about all the Nancy-and-Jonathan thing; he didn't even question Nancy's closeness when they sat back down on the couch: they were clearly freaked out, more scared than either of them were willing to admit. But this - *Monsters Hunters Training Camp, or whatever* – this could be good; he has a good feeling about it.

"She's here". Jonathan voice startles him, he looks up and sees Nancy; a shotgun on the hood of her car and a smaller gun in her hand, handling them like she had been doing it for years – and maybe, Steve realizes, she has. They get out of the car, and Nancy smiles at them; reaching for Jonathan's hand as they get closer – Steve hates it a bit, but there's not much he can do about it. "Okay" he says, forcing his eyes away from their joined hands "where do we start?". "First shooting, then hand- to hand" Nancy says, reaching for the shotgun "I have a feeling that will be hell". "For you and me both" Steve says, before he can stop himself; Jonathan freezes on the spot, eyes down. "Relax, men" he says, trying to get the tension to ease up "I deserved it, and fucking Billy Hargrove beaten my ass too:

I need it”.

Jonathan seems to relax a bit, and Nancy expression unfreezes; emergency avoided, Steve is proud of himself. “What’s up with that guy, anyway?” Nancy asks, looking already pissed off – Mike must have filled her in, and Will probably told Jonathan. Nancy puts the smaller gun in his hand, and touches his hands to show him how to hold it – Steve might find it a bit difficult to talk like this, *he can do it*. “Racist asshole, likes to scare little girls” he says, as Nancy adjusts his stance with her hands on his shoulders “and fights like an animal, on top of that”. Nancy looks even angrier, her eyes spilling pure rage; “you have it handled?” she asks, between angry and worried.

“For now” he answers – Billy is a loose cannon, no one knows when he is going to snap again; he is not lying to Nancy about it “Max drugged him, and threatened his balls with the bat; as long as the fear holds, I guess”. Nancy smiles at that, and Steve sees Jonathan trying to hide a little smile too; Steve can’t blame them, Max is awesome. “Okay” Nancy frowns, getting back to work “unlock the safety, and put your pointer on the trigger; shoot when you feel ready”.

Steve breathes in, then out; and shoots. He remembered gunshots to be loud, but now they seem even louder and the recoil is stronger than he expected, too; he plants his feet on the ground better, and shoots again. After a couple of more shots Nancy stops him, and gives the gun to Jonathan; between the two of them, they don’t even get one of the targets – it gets even more pathetic when Nancy gets four out of five; Steve loves her so much. Jonathan is looking at Nancy in the same way he knows he is, Steve is ready to get at least a scowl when he catches him looking; but Jonathan just keeps smiling, *Steve will never understand that guy*.

“So” Nancy says, clearly proud of herself “you two need target practice, no other way to get better”. “We surely can’t get worse” Jonathan says, giving Steve a sympathetic look; Steve never expected their interactions to go smoothly, in any universe – but lately Steve has been wrong a lot, so. “Now” Nancy looks between them, putting the gun back on the hood of her car “hand-to-hand, where do I even start?”.

Jonathan laughs, like he can't believe what is happening "I don't know why you think I'm the expert on this, honestly". He pauses, getting close to Nancy "but not getting your thumb broken in the process, is probably a good start" he says, adjusting her fingers. "Don't squeeze the first too tight, and move with your whole body when you hit" he says, body barely hinting the movement himself. "I don't know how much damage you can do, given your size, but don't go for nose or jaw" Jonathan says, giving Nancy a serious look "that just pisses people off more: if you're in real danger, go for the throat". Steve doesn't know why Jonathan knows any of this; but he has a feeling he wouldn't like the answer, so he doesn't ask.

"Okay" Nancy says, getting her first high ad dropping her stance "come on"; Steve, in Jonathan's place, would be freaking out so bad: a determined Nancy Wheeler putting herself in a position in which she can only get hurt, by him – Steve almost shudders. But Jonathan simply nods, drops his stance and opens his hands in front of her; "go for it" he says, looking at her "first punch, for real". Nancy punches Jonathan's hand, but the hand barely moves at all; Nance keeps hitting for a while, Jonathan's hand getting a bit red. "Okay" Jonathan says, when they stop "you're not bad, but you definitely need to get stronger"; Nancy just nods and then turns to him. "Your turn" she says.

Steve is at loss: this can either end badly or very very badly – he doesn't like the odds, at all; but Jonathan, that keeps surprising him to no end, takes the lead. "Okay" he says, standing in front of him "I know you throw a mean punch". He smiles at Steve for a second, probably trying to make him stop freaking out "you just need to stop relying on it"; Steve smiles too, deciding not to point out that he was being smart with Billy, but he knocked him flat anyway.

They start to mock fight, dodging each other's punches; Nancy looks at them, sitting on her car with the guns. Steve almost trips backwards at one point, but Jonathan catches his hand before he falls; Nancy laughs unapologetically, making fun of them both. Jonathan is smiling widely while he punches and dodges, and Steve is too – he feels a weight he didn't know he had lift from his chest, *like suddenly monsters aren't as scary anymore*: he is sweaty and tired, and there are monsters in the shadows, and kids to protect; but

maybe, *maybe*, Steve doesn't have to do it alone.

Notes for the Chapter:

As you might have guessed from the title, the main idea for this was basically those three working their feelings out; the conversation between Jonathan and Steve at sunrise was actually the first thing I wrote. I'll publish the next chapter sooner, I hope. Comments are always welcome!

3. Chapter 3

It's cold and dark, the woods seem endless; Jonathan is screaming her name, so she runs. She keeps running, but she can't find him; Steve calls her, she keeps running. She sees Hop's hut, dark smoke around it; Mike is there shouting Will's name. She is almost there, Steve is swinging the bat and Jonathan is shouting. The smoke swallows them, she is too late.

Nancy wakes up, sweating badly and with her heart beating in her ears; there's barely any light outside: it's a miracle she didn't scream. She gets out of bed and in the shower, there's no point on trying to go back to bed anyway - she breaths in, and out: *she is alive, Mike is alive, Jonathan and Steve are alive, everyone's okay.*

Those two are probably already running right now: Jonathan told her he crosses the woods to Steve's house as soon as he gets up, so around five and a half in the morning, and Steve's room lights are already up. Nancy almost can't believe how well those two are getting along: she knows them, she expected them to be civil with each other; but more than that, like actually having conversations or spending time with each other willingly, she didn't expect at all. Actually, she didn't expect for *the three of them* to go along with each other so well.

On Saturdays they have their *Monsters Hunters Training Camp*, as Steve keeps calling it; they do movie nights on Fridays, while pretending to watch over the kids. They sit at lunch together most days, or she sits with Steve if Jonathan has things to develop in the darkroom; when she needed to review her notes before next period, she found them eating on Jonathan's car –Steve trying to convince Jonathan of the value of Old Time Rock & Roll, and Jonathan just turning the volume of his radio up at Steve's arguments, instead of answering.

They study together sometimes, in the school library; or she tries to make them study, while they do their damned best to distract her too – but all three of them actually manage to get their work done every time, despite everything; she thinks Steve studies more with them than he would actually on his own. They talked about college once; Steve closed off on them as soon as the subject appeared, until

Jonathan mentioned taking a gap year to save money. He told them he sent the letters, but he wasn't sure he would get in anywhere; that he wasn't sure if he wanted to go anymore, even if he did – Nancy didn't ask, because Steve didn't look like he was trying to prepare himself for an eventual failure, and she didn't know how to take that.

Nancy hears movements downstairs as she gets out of the bathroom, making her realize that she stayed in the shower way more than she planned to; it's still incredibly early anyway, so she can take her time getting ready. She remembers spilling in front Jonathan how long it takes for Steve to get his hair done every morning: Jonathan laughed so hard he had to stop eating for a while, Steve glared at her in betrayal for days – Nancy gets her jeans on, passes in front of the mirror to get to the closet. *She is smiling.*

Nancy stops on her tracks and gets in front of the mirror properly: yes, she is smiling. At six in the morning, after getting woken up by one of her worst nightmares, Nancy sees herself smile in the mirror and almost can't believe it. Because it's not a smile just for show, the fake ones she has to put on not to make her mother worry; it's a genuine one, that reaches her eyes in a way she barely remembers. This girl genuinely smiling at her, it's a new one: it's not the naive girl she used to be before Barb, but it's not the girl with a hole made of shadows and grief in her chest either; *this Nancy Wheeler smiles getting ready for school, and teaches Jonathan Byers and Steve Harrington how to shoot in the weekends.*

Nancy gets ready in minutes, rushes to the kitchen to get her lunch and breakfast and leaves the house almost running; she is eager to get to school, suddenly, *to see them.* She gets in the car and turns the radio on, one of Jonathan's mix tapes already in the stereo – she'll tell Jonathan to make one for Steve too, so she can steal all his other tapes and listen to him whine about the lack of joy in the songs. *Her stomach drops and turns, and she doesn't know why she feels like this, she doesn't know how to place this feeling still; but today Nancy Wheeler doesn't give a fuck.*

Steve parks in front of the Henderson's house and has barely the time to light up his cigarette, before Dustin comes running from the front door; shouting at his mother where he is going. "Hi, Mrs. Henderson!" he says from the car "I'll give Dustin a lift back, don't worry if it gets late". He can see the woman's smile even from afar, "Thank you, Steve. Dustin, make sure to thank Steve too, for all his troubles". Dustin mutters a "yeah, yeah", and Steve starts the car "goodbye, Mrs. Henderson".

"So" Dustin says, turning towards him with a dangerous glint in his eyes "Will just said we moved the game night to his place, this week". Steve looks at him suspiciously, that can't be all "so?". "No, man!" Dustin says, huffing "Why! The right question is why!". Steve rolls his eyes; he swears sometimes he doesn't get why he likes this kid at all – he loves them all actually, Max and Lucas, even Mike. He is getting to know Will too; even if his quietness must be a Byers thing, so it's not exactly going fast. "Why?" he asks, receiving a look that screams *finally* back. "Eleven! Hopper said she can stay with us for a couple of hours, but only at the Byers since Mrs. Byers is the only other adult who *knows*".

"That's great" Steve nods; he barely met the girl himself, and almost always on a battlefield – for what the guys told him about her, she sounds like the scariest and the sweetest kid ever all together; meeting her will be interesting, he thinks. "So, you're playing with us this time?" Dustin asks, already dropping the puppy eyes; Steve chuckles "Sorry, buddy. Nance and Jonathan already planned movie night" - and Steve really doesn't want to have to study to play a game, no matter how much the kids praised it. "Asshole" Dustin shoots back, dropping in his seat – Steve will have to get them all to get ice cream to make up for it, maybe pizza too. "What's up with that anyway?"

"With what?" Steve asks, genuinely confused; Dustin rises an eyebrow at him "You, Jonathan and Nancy? I thought she broke your heart". And okay, Steve should be surprised this didn't happen before now: except for Nancy and Jonathan, he spends most of his time around those dipshits, driving them around and keeping an eye on them as much as he can; and Dustin doesn't have a delicate bone in his body, someone was going to ask sooner or later. "We're friends"

he says, but he doesn't sound convinced even to himself – the label seems wrong: too reductive for what he feels for Nancy, but not fitting for Jonathan either. Steve feels closer to Jonathan than he ever did with any other friend in his life, even if he's with Nancy; but at the same time Jonathan is still far away, like he is letting Steve see just the tip of the iceberg.

"Friends? With your ex-girlfriend and her new boyfriend?" Dustin looks perplexed - and if you put it like that, it is kind of weird. "Yeah? I don't know, I don't really see it like that" Steve breaths in; he doesn't know why he is trying to explain this when he doesn't even understand it. "They understand, okay? They have seen the monsters and all that, so they get it. And I've been with Nancy for an year, even if she broke up with me; and Jonathan is okay, pretty cool even". Dustin looks at him, his eyes staying on his face for a minute, and then nods. "If you say so" he says, shrugging "but we're here for you, if you ever want to talk".

That makes Steve's eyes feel a bit watery, Dustin is really kind of amazing: it's easy to forget that he is not only their babysitter, that he protected them as much as they protected him that night; that they're smart, and resourceful, and he likes spending time with them – he cares about them and, apparently, they care about him. "I know, buddy" he has to stop himself for ruffling his hair, but the struggle is real. "I'm here for you too, all of you" Dustin looks at him, and nods; "I know" he answers, but sounding like he just found out.

Steve doesn't know if he has the required skills to give those kids emotional support; he doubts anyone does, after what they have gone through. But he will do his best, either with a bat or just listening: these kids shouldn't be alone. Steve is not alone anymore, he has Jonathan and Nancy now –something in that thought, *he has Jonathan and Nancy*, makes his heart beat a bit faster.

In the quietness of the dark room, in his free period, Jonathan Byers works on his photos; it might seem completely ordinary to anyone

else, but it feels far from that. For Jonathan photography is always been something that helped him see the world more clearly, but also that helped him process it; his photos show the world as it is in that second, but from his perspective. After the Demogorgon, his photos were all of Will and mom just being; after the shadow monster, it has been all about Will for a while. He will see other people in them now, he knows: Nancy and, *even if something about it scares him*, Steve.

Nancy is on his bed, dressed in only one of his shirts, smiling up at him – Jonathan loves her so much, it still seems like a miracle that she wants him. *Nancy in his kitchen, Nancy on his couch, Nancy posing for him against his car. Nancy smiling, leaning on his car, pulling a confused Steve Harrington to her* – Jonathan took the photo himself, but looking at it right now it's still a bit confusing. *Steve Harrington's back, as he runs on the path where they found Will's bike when he disappeared* – Steve's figure, even if already pretty far away, in perfect focus. *Steve with a gun in his hand, Nancy's hand on Steve's back* – their figures are blurred in this one, the targets afar in focus.

Steve standing in the Wheelers' kitchen, a hand on Will's head – Will came up from the basement to get more snacks that time, Steve moved to the kitchen before either Nancy or Jonathan could. Steve likes to be around the kids, really likes it: he is relaxed and cheerful with all of them, but to Jonathan it seemed like he was making the effort to talk to Will more; he protected his friends that horrible night, he probably wanted to connect with him too. It makes Jonathan's knees feel a bit weak, seeing someone else look at Will like that. *Nancy in his kitchen, leaning over Will's shoulder to look at his homework* – he and Nancy were hanging out while he washed the dishes, when Will came in to the kitchen asking for help in chemistry; Nancy had it handled before he even got his hands out of the water. The look on her face is almost the same as Steve's in the last photo, protective and fond: Nancy was there for the exorcism too, no wonder she became a little protective of Will.

Nancy and Steve in the library, sitting on the opposite sides of the table. Steve outside of his brother's school, surrounded by kids. Nancy leaning on her locker, looking at the school entrance. Steve and Nancy's backs, side by side on the Wheeler's porch – Jonathan takes a deep breath, his heart beating a bit faster than normal, his knees faintly keeping him

up: he sees it. *Nancy with Steve's bat, Steve looking at her fondly. Steve and Dustin in the Wheeler's kitchen, Nancy looking at them in amusement. Nancy and Steve in front on the television, looking directly into the camera* – they turned to him just as he took the photo, asking him something he doesn't remember; in the photo Jonathan can see them clearly, all their attention was on him: he is not used to this, any of this.

Jonathan is not used to having people around, people who are not mom and Will; he isn't used to constant interaction, to making plans, to chatter. Jonathan isn't used to people giving attention to him, and he has always been sure that he wouldn't be interested in it anyway; but his photo are showing him something else. Jonathan runs with Steve almost every morning, their initial awkwardness vanishing after they settled on a companionable silence; Jonathan makes out with Nancy, and not only that if they're alone, on his own bed for endless hours. He spends lunch with them, Friday nights with them, Saturday mornings with them; and he feels comfortable with them. It's amazing how *not out of place* he feels with them, like being Jonathan Byers the weirdo doesn't matter for them; because he is just as out of the ordinary as he has always been, but they choose to stay with him anyway. Jonathan brushes his tear strained cheeks – he doesn't even know when he started crying, it's a miracle he didn't ruin any photo – packs his bag, and gets out of the darkroom: having people around isn't that bad, he thinks, *if it's Nancy and Steve*.

Nancy parks in front of the Byers' house, and Jonathan is already at the door; leaning against the frame with just a t-shirt and sweatpants. "Hi!" she says, she has been in a good mood all day; for days, actually. "Hi" Jonathan answers, voice sweet and fond; he kisses her on the door, kisses her for real – so they are alone, she is going to make the best of it. Nancy touches his lips with her tongue, smiles when he groans in the kiss; she pushes him inside the house, closing the door after her without breaking the kiss. "So, we're alone?" she asks, teasingly; she is rewarded with a deep blush from Jonathan, and then a brief nod. "Good" she says, taking his hand and leading him to

his room “can’t wait to get you naked”.

Nancy pulls her shirt off and starts on her jeans, she can feel Jonathan’s eyes on her as he takes off his own; she gets rid of her bra and kisses Jonathan, walking backwards to the bed. Nancy falls, and Jonathan falls on top of her; he holds her waist and lifts her on the bed, till her head is comfortably on the pillow. He kisses her hungrily, bites her neck for a second, sucks on the swell on her breast lightly – Jonathan is different in bed: he is still the same sweet and attentive guy; but he is less shy, less guarded. Even the first time they did this – in that guy’s underground apartment, Jonathan’s first time ever – he had been nervous, and maybe a bit embarrassed, but not afraid of following his instincts.

“I’ve never done this, before” he said from above her, looking straight in her eyes. He was blushing furiously, and he looked incredibly embarrassed; but his gaze didn’t flinch, and the hands on her cheek and waist were firm. “We can stop, if you don’t want to” she said; what she has with Jonathan is so much more than sex, she wasn’t going to ruin it because they were rushing. “I don’t want to stop” he answered, moving his clothed hips against hers; making them both gasp “but you have to tell me if I do something wrong; say the word and I stop immediately, okay?”. His hands reached the hem of her panties as he spoke, Nancy was barely able to nod before he touched her.

Jonathan is good: not experience good, but they are working on it; he is passion good, enthusiasm good, loving. He is good in the way he kisses her everywhere, as he works her with his fingers; in the way he bites her thigh and then smiles at her, as he pulls her panties off. He stays on her breasts, licking and sucking her nipples; but he always looks at her face as she cums, his eyes filled with love and arousal. “Nancy?” he says, looking up at her, his face low on her belly and his hands on her panties, asking for permission; Nancy nods, smiling at him. When she is completely naked in front of him, Jonathan looks at her in a way that makes her blush; she is used to be naked in bed with her partner, but there is something in his eyes that makes her feel giddy and shy for a second.

Jonathan comes up to kiss her, desperately and hungrily; as his hand touches her, teasing her wetness before he sinks a finger inside. Nancy gasps in the kiss, biting her lips right after; Jonathan smiles,

and moves his thumb to brush the bundle of nerves between her legs. “No need to restrain yourself” he says, pulling Nancy’s lower lip away from her teeth with his own “we’re alone”. Nancy smiles at that, comeback ready on the tip of her tongue – he is the one that never lets himself moan, to the point where he covers his mouth with his hands; even if they are hundred percent sure no one can hear them – but Jonathan adds another finger inside of her, making her moan.

Jonathan teases her nipples with his hand, speeding up the rhythm; he sucks on her neck, and kisses her deeply. Nancy can feel herself getting close, quicker than usual – but it’s probably for good; the Byers are hosting the game night, and she wants to get Jonathan off too before anyone arrives. “Close?” Jonathan asks; he knows she usually prefers to slow down at this point, delaying her orgasm until she melts in his hands. “Don’t stop” she says, gasping and moaning between words “no time, you’re hosting”. Jonathan’s eyes widen, like he forgot about that; but his fingers speed up even more, his thumb getting more insistent. “Right” he says, looking at her with a faint smile and his adoring eyes full of arousal – Nancy is looking at his face, his lips, as they move around his next words “*Steve’s coming*”.

Nancy comes immediately, shouting. Jonathan said his name, with his fingers inside her: Jonathan’s voice rough with arousal saying Steve’s name; Jonathan’s red bitten lips moving to form Steve’s name; Jonathan’s hard cock pushing against her tights, his fingers wet with her - *saying Steve’s name*. Nancy can’t remember ever coming this hard. Jonathan is still looking at her, smiling - he doesn’t seem to have noticed anything weird: *not that she came at her ex-boyfriend’s name; nor that he said her ex-boyfriend’s name, while they were having sex*. She puts her hand around Jonathan’s arousal, kissing him lightly; but her mind seems to be stuck on *Jonathan saying Steve’s name, on Jonathan and Steve* – and there, as Jonathan cums in her hand, she realizes: *she is so fucked*.

Notes for the Chapter:

So, I admit I was at least a day late on my schedule to publish this chapter. I will do better next week, probably. Great thanks to anyone that commented, left kudos or even just read my work so far; love you all, see you next week.

4. Chapter 4

Jonathan feels Nancy's fingers intertwining with his own and smiles, before she even speaks. "Hey" she says softly, smiling at him "do you have plans?". "Not really" he answers, shrugging "I just need to check on some photos". Nancy nods, biting her lips; when "Nance! Jon!" he doesn't even have to turn around, Steve is the only one who calls him that. Steve puts an hand behind his neck as he reaches them, and he can see the other on Nancy's shoulder – casual touching, having Steve's and Nancy's hands pass on his skin like it's no big deal, is always surprising for Jonathan. He suspects it's because he never had any friends before, and he wasn't used to show his affection with touch anyway; Will and Mom are more touch orientated than he is, but not really that open either.

"Practice is cancelled! I'm dreaming, I can't believe I don't have to see that asshole's face today". Jonathan is kind of worried about the whole Billy situation, has been since Steve described it as a ticking bomb; he knows Nancy is too, but they are keeping an eye on it, and there's nothing much to do sadly. "Great!" Nancy says, smiling at Steve "I was just asking Jonathan to help me review for my English test". Steve, obviously, groans; but "I'm in" he says, in a defeated tone. "Yes!" Nancy says, even lifting her first a bit "Jonathan needs to stop in the dark room, and then we can go to the library". Nancy's hand is warm against his, like Steve's on his neck; she is smiling and skipping a bit, he is walking behind their joined hands with a goofy smile on his face. "You can come along" Jonathan talks before he even registers it, something that doesn't happen often "the darkroom isn't a danger zone, you know".

Nancy is surprised, looking at Jonathan and then more subtly at Steve; Steve looks stunned, then nervous. "Are you sure?" he asks, his brows frowned and eyes uncertain. And Jonathan is sure, weirdly enough: the dark room is his safe place. He brought Nancy there when they were searching for Barb, but that was an emergency; and Steve was actually the one that ruined the safety of it for a while, since that whole thing happened – it seems weird thinking about it now, he knew he was wrong even back then; but now that he knows how good and protective Steve actually is, he is even more sure about

it. Steve and Nancy in his safe place is something that doesn't scare him – *okay, maybe he is a bit nervous*. “Yeah” he answers, smiling “if you want to?”. Nancy's smile widens, her hand tightening, and nods; Steve shakes his head for a second, but then he smiles too “sure!”.

When Jonathan unlocks the darkroom door his hands are shaking a bit. He turns to Nancy and Steve before he actually opens the door; they look kind of nervous too: the idea of them being affected about this makes him go weak in the knees. Jonathan steps in the darkroom, followed by Nancy and Steve, and closes the door; he thinks about locking it, for some reason, but doesn't. “It will only take a minute” he says, hands busy already; after a couple of minutes he stills, there's too much silence. He turns around and Nancy and Steve are still at the door, looking around sheepishly: Nancy looks surprised by the whole situation, but contempt; Steve is fidgeting, like he wants to look around, but he doesn't want to step on any toes – Jonathan laughs: they're adorable. “You can look around, you know” he says, smiling while he gets back to work “I wouldn't have invited you, if I didn't want you to”.

Nancy is the first to step forward, coming beside him; she points at one of photos hanging, *the one of her and Steve on the Wheeler's porch*, and then looks at him. “I don't remember you taking this, when was it?” she asks; Jonathan smiles “One movie night, Steve needed a cigarette break; during *The Godfather*, I think”. Steve gets closer, finally, and looks at the photo from behind Nancy - Jonathan is nervous for a second, but he calms down since there's no reason to. “That's our backs” Steve says, frowning “I guess it's artistic and shit, with the lights and the cigarette smoke; it's good, I think, I don't know much about this” he steps back, looking around; he points at *the one of him and Nancy during target practice* “our backs again... Are there any where you can actually see our faces?”. Jonathan laughs, stepping to the other side of the thread.

He doesn't want them to see the one where they are both looking at him, for some reason; so he hides it under his bag while they are not looking at him. “Here” Jonathan says, handing Steve the one where Nancy pulls him towards her. “I remember this one!” Steve says, pointing it to Nancy; Nancy smiles too, looking up at him “I believe I posed for you that day, Mr. Byers”. Jonathan smiles, and hands her

the photo where she is posing on his car; Steve stretches his neck to look at it, and smiles in the fond way he does when Nancy is being silly – Jonathan feels warm in the chest; he knows he should probably feel jealous, but instead his knees get weak and his heart speeds up a bit.

“Do I have model-like photos, too?” Steve asks, teasingly; Jonathan hands him the answer before he can stop himself. *Steve is leaning on the lockers, unlit cigarette between his lips and sunglasses on; his face turned to the side, one knee bent* – Jonathan took the photo before Nancy could call out for him, he hadn’t given much attention to it before. But as Steve looks at it, Jonathan realizes the error in that: If the one of them looking at him shows how they pay attention to him, the one in Steve’s hands shows how much attention Jonathan pays to them.

“Wow” Steve says, mouth hanging open a bit – Jonathan feels himself blush, *this is not how you feel when your friends look at your work* “I’m hot as hell”. Nancy puts an hand on Steve shoulder, Steve leans down automatically to accommodate her; she looks at the photo for a second – her eyes widen and she bites her lower lip, she likes it. “Hmn” she says, shrugging “you’re not bad”; her mocking impassivity caves, when Steve gasps loudly and puts an hand on his chest – Jonathan has to look away, *this is not how you feel when your girlfriend teases her ex-boyfriend*. Jonathan looks at them looking at his photos, pointing and talking about what he creates; he sees Steve and Nancy, talking and smiling in his safe place: *it’s not just the safety of friends that he feels, he realizes, it’s something deeper. And it’s for them both.*

“You know more about Shakespeare than he did himself, Nance” Steve says, exasperated and playful; Jonathan smiles, looking away from Steve “he’s right, there’s nothing for you to study anymore”. Nancy groans, relaxing on the headboard of her bed: she has been admittedly studying for days, but English tests always put her in a frenzy; she feels much more at ease with chemistry and calculus. She gets them a lot better. “Jesus” Steve says, as his head touches the bed

"I can feel the headache coming"; Jonathan laughs shortly, shaking his head in disbelief – having them both in her room, on her bed, after the realization she had last time with Jonathan, was killing her. Realizing she still wants her ex boyfriend, while having sex with your current boyfriend, is bad enough; but the point is: she clearly wants Jonathan too, she wants them both. Having them, sitting side by side on the feet of her bed, listening to her rant about an English test they aren't even taking, is a special kind of torture.

"I'm sorry" she says, biting her lower lip "I know I'm overreacting". Steve looks up immediately, looking almost guilty; and then looks at Jonathan, his eyes asking for help – *Nancy is starting to sweat, they need to stop looking at each other*; when did they even get close enough to talk with their eyes only, anyway? "You are, but it's okay" Jonathan says, shrugging "now you are more than prepared for the test, and can relax"; Steve nods along, finally looking away from Jonathan. "Alright" Nancy huffs; they're right, she know they are "then distract me, or I'm going to freak out". Jonathan chuckles, he grabs her calves and pulls them down; her head hits the pillow, and she has to take a deep breath – *did he have to do that?* She loves when he moves her around in bed; but that's not the distraction she had in mind. Not with Steve there. *Or is it? God, she is such a pervert.*

"You have all my mix tapes in the car, right?" Jonathan says, getting up from the bed; Nancy is just about to tell him that she has one in the stereo already, but Steve beats her to it. "*Jon*, don't" Steve gets up too, as he speaks; and Nancy is unbelievably glad for it: she is sure the bad shook with her, when Steve called Jonathan that – he just shortened Jonathan's name, but hearing the familiarity in which he says it, it's overwhelming; even worst: the nickname started to slip from her too, sometimes, and knowing her and Steve are the only ones who call Jonathan that is too much.

"Just go back to bed, man" Steve says, with an hand on Jonathan's shoulder "we want her to relax, not to get even more depressed"; Jonathan scowls at him, his eyes playful "I'll never understand why you hate good music, honestly". Steve shakes his head, smiling widely "we have very different understandings of good music, I think"; Jonathan's shoulders drop, and he walks back to the bed "Yes, you lack of understanding". Nancy knows Steve just rolled his eyes;

and by Jonathan's amused smile, he knows too – all of this, them bantering about music in her room, makes her feel so fucking good; *damn it all, she is so gone.*

You Should Be Dancing by Bee Gees starts, and Nancy bursts out laughing; Stave gave her the movie soundtrack as an impromptu gift the year before, Jonathan was going to hate it with a passion. In fact, Jonathan groans, stretching his legs beside her with his head at the feet of the bed; "Steve" he whines, sounding almost actually hurt "for the love of all that's holy, stop this madness". Nancy and Steve laugh. Jonathan gets incredibly dramatic about music; Steve loves riling him up obviously, and Nancy loves watching them this relaxed with each other – *yeah, but that's not actually innocent from her perspective anymore, isn't it? Shit, she is losing it.*

Steve gets to bed too, sitting cross-legged next to Jonathan, facing him with an amused glint in his eyes; "you liked the movie, you said so!"; Jonathan groans again, throwing his head back and closing his eyes; even pinching the space between his eyes with two fingers "I said the movie wasn't bad, the soundtrack is still hideous". Steve laughs again, Nancy is been smiling so much her cheeks hurt; Jonathan looks at them in utter betrayal, but with a little smile escaping his lips. "You can't deny the rhythm" Steve says, barely able to seem serious "come on, Jon: you should be dancing". Jonathan laughs at that, and then laughs even more when Steve starts actually dancing a bit; Nancy can't stop laughing herself: this is gold. She wishes she had a camera handy.

Steve has his arms open wide, palms up, and he is moving his shoulders and hips; he is singing along too, while the bed moves a bit under his movements. Nancy notices how his hips are moving a second too late, and she has to look away; her gaze goes instinctively to Jonathan, worried she got caught, but she finds something else. Jonathan is still laughing, but softly; he is looking at Steve and shaking his head, as the other mouths the words as to encourage him to sing along – Nancy knows that gaze, she saw Jonathan give it to her for more than an year; she recognizes the fondness and the warmth behind it, but she can't be right. And just then, Jonathan's gazes wonders a bit, catching Steve's hips moving; Nancy sees him blush, and look away immediately – and that, Nancy knows what it

is, *but there's no way she is seeing this right*. But even the possibility of it, makes her shake from head to toe: *Nancy Wheeler, the day before an English test, on her bed with Jonathan Byers and Steve Harrington, listening to ridiculous disco music, has never felt so happy and horny at the same time.*

Steve is incredibly tired and his t-shirt sticks grossly on his skin, the unforgiving wind is making him shiver all over; he feels amazing, his cheeks hurt from smiling. "I'm buying a punching bag" he says, as Jonathan drinks from the bottle of water Nancy just took from him; "and you plan to hang it where, exactly?" he says, sharing a look with Nancy. Steve sighs loudly, rolling his eyes dramatically "I don't know, a tree maybe? I feel like we got a lot quicker, but we can't really test power". Jonathan nods, sitting on the ground next to his car, Nancy's foot hanging beside his head; He grunts as he sits down, and he rolls his shoulders with a pained frown – they got wider, Steve notices. Jonathan had board shoulders even before he started working out with him, and he knew from experience that he was strong; after almost three months of pushups – and sit ups, and running, and hand-to-hand practice; and crunches, Nancy added to the list – his muscles are more defined, Steve can almost outline the ones of his shoulders though the threadbare shirt.

"You have power, your biceps can attest to that" Nancy says, looking between Steve and Jonathan; her cheeks are a bit pink, but they did just finished the last sit ups series. "Well, Jon is bulking up" he says, looking at the other boy; Jonathan blushes a bit. Steve keeps forgetting he is not used to receiving compliments from him – or compliments in general, before Nancy came around; Steve really doesn't like to think about it. "Shut up" he says; glaring at him, but smiling at the same time "you aren't exactly getting leaner, either". Steve smiles broadly, lifting his sleeve and flexing his arm "I know, right?"; Nancy laughs, spilling a bit of the water she was drinking.

"I think I'm getting stronger, too" Nancy says, as Steve sits down too; next to Jonathan, with Nancy's leg hanging between them "slowly,

since my sleeping schedule is surprisingly normal". Steve is glad for that; he knows Nancy has nightmares too, but she usually manages to sleep through them and doesn't remember them in the morning. She used to have them when they were still together too, he could hear her mumbling in her sleep when he climbed to her window during the night; he used to do that a lot, because of his own nightmares, even if they never talked about it.

"I think mine are getting better" Steve speaks quietly, keeping things like that for himself didn't do any good for him, last time around. Nancy looks at him immediately, eyes wide with shock; Jonathan just nods, looking at him right in the eyes – Steve still feels like he doesn't really know Jonathan: they banter about music, they watch movies, they work out silently; *but Steve feels like he is on the first floor of the ten-storey building that is Jonathan Byers*. But then Jonathan gives him one of those looks, eyes open and vulnerable, like *he wants Steve to see*; and he wonders if maybe he reached the fifth floor already, if Jonathan is showing him more than he thinks, and he just keeps missing it. "I'm sleeping better, too" Jonathan says, voice soft "you were right, working out helps".

Steve feels his smile widen, and he has to look away from Jonathan for a second; his gaze lands on Nancy, and he is stuck. Nancy Wheeler – in grey sweats and a shirt way too big, hair pulled up and skin glistening with sweat – is looking directly in his eyes, smiling softly: and Steve should look away, *because she is with Jonathan and Steve would never do that to him*; but he can't. There's something in her eyes, something that makes Steve's heart flip: she looks proud, proud that he is facing his nightmares and even talking about them; that he stopped pretending, that all *the bullshit is gone*. Steve smiles, eyes watering a little, and reaches out for her with his hand unconsciously; Nancy takes it in her own, holding tight. Then Steve's smile crumbles, his head turns to Jonathan immediately; he can see Nancy snapping too, from the corner of his eye – *What the hell is he doing? He is such an idiot!*

But Jonathan is smiling at them, his eyes kind of watery too, and fond: and Steve is stunned, *he can't believe he didn't ruin everything*. Steve moves his hand to untangle it from Nancy's, but Jonathan stops him with a shrug; he looks up at Nancy, and offers her his own hand.

She takes it immediately, and Jonathan's smile widens. Then he relaxes against the car and closes his eyes, still smiling. Steve looks up at Nancy - holding both of their hands, looking into the woods with a smile on her face, too - he considers panicking; but there's no reason for him to, if those two are okay with it. Steve adjusts against the car, and closes his eyes; he feels his own lips stretch in a smile, when Jonathan whispers "*we're getting better*".

Jonathan is in the Wheeler's kitchen, standing awkwardly by the door while Ms. Wheeler asks him about his mother – he is waiting for Nancy to come down: Steve was taking the kids to get pizza, and asked them if they wanted to tug along; it was out of their usual routine, but Jonathan didn't have to work and it sounded like fun. The phone rings, and Mrs. Wheeler answers politely; but then her tone gets a little panicked "Mike?". Nancy appears beside him in that moment, and her mother gives her a suspicious look; she passes Nancy the phone, anyway "Mike wants to talk to you?". Jonathan is immediately worried, Mike and Nancy tend to interact mostly during crises; they loved each other, but they had two strong personalities, and they tended to clash in everyday life. Nancy looks up at him, and Jonathan stomach drops: *he knows that look*, whatever Mike just told her, it's not good.

"We'll be there in a minute" she says, still looking at him with determinate eyes "wait for us" - and Jonathan knows, because she saw her like that every time they had to go against monsters and danger, that something really bad is going on. "Start the car, I need to get something" she rushes upstairs, basically running; and Jonathan does the same, barely remembering to wave at Mrs. Wheeler. He is in the car, foot on the gas pedal; seconds after Nancy steps out on the house, yelling something at her mother. "To the pizza place" Nancy says, taking the gun out of her pocket; Jonathan shudders: this is serious. "What's going on?". "Billy" she answers, sounding worried and angry "he stormed in the pizza place, Steve told him to take it outside not to cause a scene; Mike said Billy looked livid, he sounded scared". Jonathan's hand tighten on the

wheel, his knuckles going white; Nancy looks just as anxious, clutching at her gun. "He is good, he can hold his own" Jonathan says; and Nancy nods, looking as convinced as he is.

Steve is strong, but he is also a good guy; Billy, on the other hand, is just reckless and angry; Will told him that apparently Steve left the bat behind to fight him, and that Billy smashed a plate on his head: Steve has a line he knows he can't cross, like risking to kill someone; that guy doesn't even know the line exists, apparently. Jonathan is scared shitless, they need to hurry. They get to the pizza place in minutes, noticing Steve's car immediately; they hear the kids screaming voices from behind the corner, Jonathan sprints toward them. "Hurry, I take the bat" Nancy says, *I have your back*. Jonathan rounds the corner, heart beating madly in his chest; and what he sees, makes him shiver with rage.

Steve's nose is bleeding, and he probably has a black eye; Billy isn't doing much better himself, but he is on top of Steve, ready to punch him. "Stop!" Jonathan screams, marching toward them; Billy laughs, but doesn't stop for a second "Your prince is arrived!". The punch lands on Steve's face, before Jonathan grabs Billy's hair and yanks him away; he kicks him in the back with all his force, he is furious. Billy seems surprised, but mostly in pain; he reacts quickly, elbowing Jonathan in the stomach. Jonathan gasps and lets go of his hair, stepping away as Billy gets up and turns to him; he looks like a wild animal, blinded with rage – Jonathan prefers pure fury to mocking aggressiveness, it means he doesn't have to hold back; Billy might be taller and bigger than him, but Jonathan is *strongly motivated*.

Billy goes for the punch, but Jonathan dodges it easily - he sees Nancy with the corner of his eye, more angry than anything else; and Steve, now holding the bat, just behind Billy, looking actually scared. Jonathan knows Nancy won't hesitate to use the gun, if necessary; he knows Steve would step in immediately, if things get bad: *they have his back*. But Jonathan is too angry to be considerate. He punches Billy in the throat, making him gasp pathetically; and kicks him in the knee, making him fall – *it's the second time this piece of shit beats Steve up, and in front of the kids*. He punches him in the face as soon as he kneels, then he yanks his hair again and punches him in the stomach; Billy whines, and actually spits blood. Jonathan's

anger hasn't quieted down at all, but killing this piece of shit wouldn't do him any good; he yanks his hair, making him look up. "This ends now" he says, staring into Billy's eyes; he looks defeated, tired, desperate, in pain – it still can't make Jonathan feel guilty: whatever this guy's problem is, it doesn't excuse his actions; scumbags like him are even worse than fucking Lonnie, and that's saying something.

Billy averts his eyes, trying to look disinterested; Jonathan yanks his hair again, making him look at his side now "I'm serious". There's Nancy, loudly taking the gun security lock off and pointing it at Billy; and Steve, with his face bloody, hitting the grass with the bat rhythmically – they look intimidating, almost scary; but to Jonathan they also look worried and angry. *Worried about him*, his mind finally catches up; angry at Billy, *for what he made him do*. Whatever he feels for them, Jonathan never felt it stronger than now.

Billy's face paints in fear as he sees the bat, and has to do a double take on Nancy's gun; he nods after a second, but stays put – now that he plumbed him to the ground, he might take the threat more seriously. "Good" Jonathan says, letting his hair go; he would have been worried about giving him his back, but Nancy and Steve still have him targeted "this was the last time". Jonathan puts an hand on Will's head – his little brother looking pale and shaken, put also weirdly proud – and walks to his car, with the rest following them; as soon as they get out of Billy's sight, he feels Nancy hug him around the waist and Steve grabbing him from the shoulders. *Whatever this feeling is, Jonathan never wants to let it go* – the sheer panic he felt when Steve was in danger, the pure admiration he has for Nancy's calmness, the anger he felt when Billy hurt Steve, the instinctive will to protect them. He grabs the back of Nancy's neck with one hand, sets the other between Steve's shoulder blades; the kids start chattering and cheering loudly, but they don't say a word. *Jonathan, whatever this is, never wants to let them go.*

Notes for the Chapter:

Hi people! I know, I'm late. You can blame the flu, my spiritual old age, or my perpetual laziness - your choice. As I said before: I really, really don't like Billy; having Jonathan beat the shit out of him was

one of my greatest pleasures. I hope you liked it & comments are always appreciated. Till next week, hopefully on time.

5. Chapter 5

Nancy shifts, trying to curl her legs up, but she can't move; then she realizes: she can't move, because she is squished between Jonathan and Steve – Jonathan's whole body is plastered against her back; Steve's head is tucked in her neck, his legs intertwined with hers. *Nancy can't breathe, this is too much: it feels almost too good to be real.*

The events of the night before flash in her mind, before she even opens her eyes: Steve's bloody face, Jonathan furiously beating up Billy; it scared the hell out of her, the entire thing. Actually, she felt more scared than angry; she hated Billy Hargrove, that piece of shit made them realize something they didn't want to face: sometimes monsters are just humans, and they are just as dangerous. They were all in shock after, but Steve was also dizzy and bruised; Nancy and Jonathan took the kids home, and then brought Steve home too. It probably wasn't necessary, but Nancy didn't want to let them out of her sight: the world seemed too dangerous, and their nerves were still thundering; being alone felt scary, being without them felt dangerous. So they put Steve in bed and sat on it beside him, not talking, but unable to go away; and, at some point, they must have fallen asleep.

Nancy is still in her pale pink dress, like Jonathan is still in his jeans; Steve actually changed in a t-shirt and sweatpants. Nancy feels Steve shift against her, his arm around her waist tightening for a second; she opens her eyes, and stares at Steve's eyes opening up slowly. The movement, must have woken up Jonathan; Nancy feels him nuzzle her neck, getting even closer to her. *Jonathan's lips brush against her neck, Steve's eyes are staring into hers;* Nancy acts before she even registers it: she kisses Steve. Not gently or quietly, but rushing and biting – *last night, Nancy almost lost Steve; if they didn't get there when they did, Steve could have been seriously hurt* . Steve is hesitant into the kiss, at the beginning; but then he reacts to her like he always did, eagerly and naturally. She turns to Jonathan as soon as her lips leave Steve's, and kisses him too; with the same passion and desperation she couldn't let go off – *Jonathan fought last night, angry and worried; one little error, and it could have ended in a very different way.*

Jonathan's hips press against her as she bites his lips; he is hard, pressed against her back. She turns to Steve and kisses him again; he is hard too, against her front – *Nancy could have lost them: she can't stop*. She sucks on Steve's tongue and his hips jerk against her, making her grind on Jonathan; the boys gasp in pleasure, Nancy moans loudly. Her hips start moving, she kisses Jonathan with a hand on the back of Steve's neck to keep him close; she switches to Steve and Jonathan's hand grabs her hip, his own finally moving along – *and it's hot, and safe, and dangerous, and amazing. Nancy can't stop*.

The neckline of her dress is pushed down, the skirt is riling up; she unbuttons Jonathan's jeans, sneaks her hand under Steve's shirt. Jonathan licks and bites her neck, while she kisses Steve; while she kisses Jonathan, Steve gropes and sucks on her breasts. Jonathan's hand is pressed under her navel, almost between hers and Steve's hips; Steve's hand is on the back of her thigh, almost brushing Jonathan's . Steve sucks on her nipple, Jonathan's fingers press against her core, above her panties; Nancy almost screams, she is going to come. Jonathan's on her neck, Steve's on her breasts; their hips move faster and faster. Nancy pulls on Steve's hair, while his lips go higher; she grabs on Jonathan's arm, as his tongue moves to her collarbones.

Their hips are almost frantic against her, their gasps turned into moans; they are facing each other above her shoulder, their eyes open. Nancy keeps her eyes open too, glued on them: Jonathan is biting behind her shoulder, Steve is sucking on her collarbone; their gazes align for a quick moment, and they are kissing. *Jonathan's lips are on Steve's, Steve sucks on Jonathan's tongue, Jonathan licks into Steve's mouth* – Nancy comes more intensely than she ever did, opening her mouth in a silent scream. She hears them moan in each other's mouths, their hips jerking frantically; Jonathan's cock twitches against her ass as he cums, Steve follows right after groaning loudly. Nancy is breathing heavily, coming down from the high of her orgasm; pressed between Jonathan and Steve, both sweaty and panting – then Nancy realizes, eyes going wide: *what the hell did she do?*

Jonathan is sitting on his couch, his camera beside him and his lighter warm in his hand; he doesn't know how long he has been in that position, but he is not feeling better - *He just left Steve's house, Steve's bed with Nancy in it.* He just ruined the best thing he ever had, he lost his only friends, because he couldn't control himself: *he lost Nancy and Steve.* The silence in the Byers' house is defeating, the couch is too spacious and the cold is biting into his skin – but Jonathan should get used to it, he is back to being alone now. When his orgasm haze cleared, *after he came grinding on Nancy's ass with his tongue in Steve's mouth,* Jonathan runs. Steve was fast asleep and Nancy was staring wide eyed at the ceiling, she didn't even move when he left the bed; he doesn't remember the walk to his house, his mind was too fucked up.

“Jonathan?”. His mom's voice makes Jonathan's head snap to the door, since he didn't hear either the car or the keys – if his mom is home, it could be pretty late. “Weren't you staying at Steve's? I just left Will at the Wheelers, Carol didn't know where Nancy was: if you want me to back you up next time, at least give me an heads-up, okay? I don't know how I got away from that one, really”. Jonathan feels the tears trying to fall from his eyes, but he fights them back in; he is not going to worry her mother with this, he can't. “Sorry, mom” he says, not looking at her “we fell asleep”. “I thought so” Joyce just shrugs, giving him a stained smile. “but a call would have been appreciated”. And Jonathan feels like shit for about not calling, making his mother worry after what happened to Will; he feels like shit about not making Nancy call Mrs. Wheeler, too – *he feels like shit about falling asleep, about waking up a bit horny, about not stopping when he should have.*

“I'm really sorry” Jonathan forces himself to look at her for just a second, then he bows his head again. His mother just snorts, shaking her head a bit “don't worry, Honey: just do better next time”. Jonathan wants to cry again, there isn't going to be a next time: he found two people who accepted him, who he trusted and cared about, and ruined everything; he was a weirdo, and a pervert, and a fag. Nancy and Steve are amazing, they accepted him and spent time with him: but he definitely went too far. “What are you doing, sitting

there with the TV off, anyway?” his mom is running around the kitchen, probably attempting to tidy up a bit. “Nothing” he says, forcing a neutral tone on his voice. “Is Steve okay? You haven’t told me what happened yet, and your brother was awfully secretive about it”. Jonathan doesn’t want to answer: from the moment he saw Steve pinned down by Billy, his emotions have been running wild; trying to put what happened into words would be hard and painful. But his mother would worry more if he didn’t say anything, and she would know if he was lying.

“Billy Hargrove was beating Steve up, he got beaten up instead”. Joyce appears in front of him immediately, wide eyed and worried “did you get hurt? Are you okay?”. “I’m okay” Jonathan stops her before she can freak out even more “he didn’t even touch me, Steve got the worst of it” – *talking about them is killing him, knowing that they will never want to see him again*. His mother looks relived, then worried again “so, is Steve okay?”. “Some bruises, nothing broken” Jonathan says, getting up from the couch to run away from the conversation “I have a shift at six, I’m taking a nap”. He doesn’t even hear his mother answer as he shuts the door of his room behind him; he flops on his bed with a huff, face buried in the pillow.

Jonathan knows he is never getting them back, that he lost both Nancy and Steve: he knows that he didn’t start it, but Nancy did when she kissed Steve; he knows that he didn’t stop it, but neither did Steve. Jonathan knows that it might not be all his fault, but he participated to it just as much as them: and now they can’t go back. *He can’t pretend he didn’t like it, when Nancy kissed Steve in front of him; he can’t pretend waking up in the same bed as them wasn’t amazing. He can’t pretend that it wasn’t arousing, seeing Steve get hard while Nancy bit his lips; that he wasn’t mesmerized by the way Nancy’s body arched, trapped between them. He can’t pretend that his mind didn’t completely shut off, the moment Steve’s lips touched his own; that touching both of them at the same time, aroused and breathless, is what pushed him over the edge.* It happened, and a part of Jonathan wouldn’t take it back even if he could.

Because Nancy is strong and hardworking, and beautiful, and ambitious: Jonathan is lucky she even looked at him once, let alone being with him – And Steve is protective and selfless, and

charismatic, and funny: Jonathan should have never looked at him as more than a friend, because even that was a miracle. Jonathan is just glad he got to know them, really: he knows that Steve Harrington likes musicals, and that he spends forty-five minutes to do his hair everyday; he knows that Nancy Wheeler hates English tests, and can't sing in tune to save her life. Jonathan trusts them with his life, he would probably trust them with Will's: Steve and Nancy are the best thing that ever happened to him, they are the only people he felt safe and loved with; and now he needs to learn how to live without them.

It's been five days since *that* happened, and Steve hasn't been able to sleep properly since then; the last time he remembers actually sleeping was right after, and when he woke up the world fell upon him. It's not a secret Steve doesn't handle change well, but he thinks this time he has some good damn reasons: first, his ex girlfriend kissed him in front of her current boyfriend; second, the boyfriend that is also his best friend didn't bat an eye at that; third, he ended up dry-humping his ex girlfriend, and the best friend just did the same; and for last, *he kissed his best friend - His very male best friend, and liked it a whole lot.* Steve is also known for doing stupid shit, but this one struck gold.

Steve parks outside of the arcade, and lights up a cigarette – he has been smoking way too much these days; but he doesn't have anything else to distract himself right now, since he can't make himself run in the mornings anymore. *Not without Jonathan.* He is dreading the weekend, he can't help but feel more than a bit desperate thinking that he won't be working out with Nance and Jon. The car door on the passage side opens, and Max sits beside him; “those idiots are late” she says, sounding way less annoyed than she looks. Steve just nods: the kids, as usual, are helping; he can freak out about his life when he doesn't have to look after them. “What's up with you, anyway?” Max asks, glaring angrily and frowning worriedly at the same time.

I had almost-sex with my ex and my male best friend, so now I am

freaking out about my whole existence: should I start with how much of a shit I am for not pushing Nancy away? Or with how messed up it is to literally cum in my pants with Jon's tongue in my mouth – no way he was telling a thirteen years old any of that, no matter how mature she is. "Nothing to worry about" he says, trying to smile even if he wants to cry a bit "I had a fight with Nancy and Jonathan". Max raises an eyebrow at him, probably trying to figure out what he is not saying to her; she must realize he isn't going to say more after a bit, and she just nods. "Just apologize, or something" she says, looking out of the window – I'm sorry that I'm still in love with Nancy, and that I also am at least half-fag for Jonathan; what do we have to study for the math test? Yeah, not happening. "What makes you think it's my fault?" Steve it's not sure whose fault it is exactly, but he knows he messed it up anyway. "It doesn't matter" Max says, rolling her eyes and then looking straight at him "look: the guys are idiots, right? I can't understand half of the things they talk about, and they get all excited for the weirdest shit. But that doesn't mean shit, at the end of the day: I still want to spend time with them".

Steve almost can't believe it: Max doesn't like to talk about friendship, almost as much as she doesn't like talking about family; Steve suspected it was because Mike pushed her away at the beginning, like she didn't feel she was an actual part of the group yet – Steve knows it's bullshit, she has been part of it since that night with the monsters; and even Eleven was warming up to her, now that she knows that she doesn't want to replace her. "It doesn't work like that" he says, sounding as sad and desperate as he feels "and watch your language, for fucks' sake". Max rolls her eyes again, and then lets out an exasperated huff; she looks at him like teachers do when he is messing up – Steve would like to remind her that he is the adult between them, even if he doesn't feel like it much.

"Listen" she says, her eyes going soft for a second "I don't know what happened, since you won't spill; but I know you have been doing better, that you smile a hell of a lot more since you made friends with those two". Steve wants to cry, he was doing so much better: Jonathan was quiet and comforting, running with him in the mornings; he made him laugh, every time he got offended by his musical taste; and his photos made him feel like he mattered in a way, that at least someone was really looking at him – and his heart

melted every time Nancy laughed, eyes teasing and happy; he felt cared for and important, when she helped him with his homework; he stopped feeling lonely since that time he hugged him, almost four months ago. *He can't believe he fucked it up, he is such an asshole.*

“So, if you don't want to stop being friends with them: don't”. Steve snorts, shaking his head – he still hasn't come to terms with the all I-kissed-Nancy-and-Jonathan situation himself, how could he ask them to? Plus, he is probably – *yes, he is still holding to plausible deniability* – attracted to Jonathan, too: What does that mean for him? Can Jonathan accept that, since he kissed him back? Is Jonathan attracted to him? What about Nancy? Can he like both, guys and girls? Wait, does he like guys? Is it just Jonathan? *It's been just questions, five days without them and Steve lost all the answers.* “It doesn't work”. “Work like that” Max interrupts him, rolling her eyes again “I get it, but just being sad and lonely isn't a solution”. Lucas and Dustin enter the car right after, cutting out whatever Steve was going to say – Nothing probably, 'cause the situation didn't have any solution for what he can see.

“Change of plans” Dustin says, with a big smile “to the Byers, Hopper is dropping Eleven off for couple of hours”. Steve looks away before any of them can see his face, and starts the car: he is going to Jonathan's house, he just hopes Nancy doesn't give Mike a ride; he has been avoiding them for days, and he is not planning on stopping now. He can't look at them, not even from afar: *he touched Nancy when he shouldn't have, he kissed Jonathan when he shouldn't want to; but he liked touching her, and damn it all he liked kissing Jonathan too.* Steve doesn't know what they think about it, but Steve can't face it: He came in his pants while kissing Jonathan Byers, with Nancy wheeler trapped between them; he watched the two of them kiss in front of him, and he felt aroused instead of jealous.

“Okay” he says, to himself; as he tries to distract himself with the kids' chatter. Max looks at him for a second, eyes serious - Steve nods at her, not to make her worry, while he keeps his eyes on the road. It was all too fucked up: Steve will just keep running – *Even if he misses them so much he can't work out anymore, or pass near the darkroom, or go anywhere near the clearing.*

It's nine in the morning and Nancy Wheeler is freaking out, because it's Saturday and she is still in her bed; that morning she woke up with the alarm at five and put on her working out clothes, just to remember that she wasn't going anywhere: *Jonathan and Steve won't be at the clearing anyway*. She is been fighting the tears for hours, hidden in her bedroom: it's been a week since she last saw them, since she ruined it. They have been avoiding each other since, probably too ashamed to even look at each other; or Nancy guesses they are ashamed, she sure as hell is. After all, she is the one who started it: *she just had to kiss Steve, and then Jonathan, didn't she? She just had to grind on them, didn't she? Why did she have to be such a slut, really?* Because at the end that's just the truth: if Nancy hadn't given in to her freak fantasies, they will still be in the clearing right now.

"What are you doing here?" Mike bursts into the room without knocking, clearly surprised by her presence. "This is my room" Nancy is already in a bad mood: she can't deal with her little brother's shit right now "what are you doing here?". "I just needed the dictionary" Mike says, already walking to the her desk "no need to be such a bitch about it". Nancy is fuming, and she sits up on the bed to glare at him – as soon as Mike sees her face, his expression changes. "Are you cry ..." he stops in the middle on the sentence, he breaths loudly "Listen: you have been in a shitty mood for more than a week now, and that's okay; almost normal. But you look kind of sad too, and now you are in your bed crying while everyone thought you were out with Jonathan and Steve doing whatever?". Nancy doesn't want to hear about it, she feels the tears threatening to spill just hearing their names – *she misses them so much, but she fucked it up and she doesn't know how to take it back; she doesn't know if she can get it back*. "Your point?" she asks, trying to sound more bitter than sad. "Okay, keep being a bitch" Mike rolls his eyes and goes back to the door, dictionary in his hand "but hiding won't solve anything".

When the door clicks shut, Nancy's hears are ringing: Mike is right, hiding isn't a solution. She runs downstairs and picks up the phone, calling the Byers house. "Yes?" It's Will, and Nancy couldn't be more glad for it. "Will, it's Nancy. Don't pass me your brother, just tell him

this: at the clearing, in twenty. Okay?” Nancy says it all in one breath, scared that the courage will leave her if she stops. “Okay?” Will says, sounding uncertain “You’re going to fix it?”. Nancy has to bite back tears again at that: they were all miserable, and they weren’t going to get better just ignoring each other – she can’t believe she let it go far enough that their brothers were worried about them. “I’ll try” Nancy says, and then she hangs up; she calls Steve’s house right after, but nobody answers no matter how many times she tries – after ten minutes she gives up, and picks his father’s car keys: she doesn’t know where Steve is, and not even if Jonathan will actually be there; but she has to try, she has to *do something*.

She sees Jonathan getting out of his car, just as she gets there; he looks tired and sad, and he won’t meet her eyes. She gets out of her car too, and their gazes land in the middle of the clearing: Steve, laying on the ground with his face to the sky, is already there. “What the ...” Steve jumps when he sees them, still near their cars looking at him from afar; he huffs and sits up, he looks even worse than he did last time Nancy left him alone – *She can’t believe she did this to them, but she is going to fix it*. She walks to Steve and sits down, leaving the space for Jonathan to close the circle; and after a couple of seconds, she sees Jonathan joining them. “Okay” Nancy starts, still unsure of what she is actually going to say – the boys are both looking down persistently, their gazes never leaving the ground “we can’t go on like this”.

Steve actually looks up at that, but his eyes are full of shock and confusion – Jonathan almost doesn’t react, but he shivers almost imperceptibly. “You two look like shit, I look like shit” Nancy takes a deep breath. Crying won’t do them any good “I feel like shit”. They both look up this time, scared and worried; the bags under their eyes are big and their shoulders are slumped. “Can’t we just” Nancy’s voice brakes, and she swallows loudly “I miss you, guys”. Nancy has to look away from them: *she know it’s all her fault, but she missed them so goddamn much* – she just wants them back, Nancy just wants Jonathan and Steve back. “I miss you, too” Steve says, surprising Nancy “both of you” – he glances at Jonathan for a second, but looks away immediately. “Me, too” says Jonathan, after a second; back to staring at the ground.

“Okay” Nancy says, breathing in relief “so can we just, like, stop avoiding each other?”. “And what?” Jonathan asks, finally looking up “pretend it never actually happened?” – Nancy shudders at that: the *pretending nothing ever happened is bullshit*, it’s what broke her and Steve up in the first place; she doesn’t want to make the same mistake again. “No way” says Steve, shaking his head while looking down again– they don’t want to lose her, she realizes, and they don’t want to lose each other either. “No” Nancy says, suddenly feeling more confident “It happened”. They both look up at her, finally meeting her eyes. “I don’t know why, I don’t know how; but it happened, and I’m willing to take the blame for starting it even, but I don’t want to lose you two on it”. The looks on their faces are identical, a mix of shock and admiration – Nancy feels like laughing, suddenly.

“But?” Jonathan cuts himself off, catching Steve’s gaze for a second; they both blush, looking away. “Men, that” Steve passes a hand through his hair nervously, then he composes himself and looks directly at Jonathan “That happened too, and it confuses the hell out of me; but Nancy is right: we can’t take it back, we can just go forward. And, honestly? I don’t even know what the fuck that means, but I know one thing: this week I have been slowly going crazier and crazier, and even the kids can’t take the moping around anymore”. When Steve pauses for a second, Jonathan catches his gaze again; he is still blushing deeply, but his eyes are soft. “Jon, don’t make me say it” Steve begs, with an embarrassed smile on his face – *I miss you*, it’s what Steve can’t say; Nancy can read it in his eyes. Jonathan looks into Steve’s eyes for what feels like hours, then he nods and he is smiling too – Nancy lets out an honestly embarrassing whimper, but she doesn’t even care.

“So” she says, her smile widening more and more every time she glances at theirs “are we too late for *Monsters Hunters Training Camp*? Do you think we can catch up before lunch?”. “We can try” Steve says, getting up from the ground “we could always skip hand-to-hand?”. “No way” Jonathan grunts, taking the hand Steve is offering him to get up “we had a week long break, I’m getting out of shape”. Nancy holds both of her hands out, asking for their help - They take them immediately, pulling her up. “Well” Nancy says, finally smiling after a week of missing them “we’ll just have to make up for it” – and

really: *Nancy Wheeler might be a freak and a slut; but with Jonathan and Steve with her, she couldn't care less.*

Notes for the Chapter:

If I am being completely honest, I'm not quite satisfied with this chapter; but since I can't pin down what exactly doesn't convince me, no matter how many times I read it, I decided to just go with it. Still, this is not the end: they are just as confused they were before, so not together yet. Thank you all for reading and leaving kudos, see you next week!

6. Chapter 6

Steve walks down the stairs in a hurry, smiling like an idiot; he is been doing that a lot, in the last month or so. “You’re out of bacon” Jonathan is standing in his kitchen, still in his sweaty shirt, making breakfast for them – they started having breakfast together at his house every Saturday after training: Actually, they started to do a whole lot of other things together, these days; they just never seemed to get bored of each other. “What are you making us, chef?” Steve says, leaning against the counter next to Jonathan - he just smiles at him, and shaking his head in mock exasperation. “Whatever it is” Nancy says, already walking to the stairs “I want it ready when I’m out of the shower, I’m starving”. Steve and Jonathan laugh together: Nancy appetite is legendary, her petite form is ridiculous compared to how much the woman eats.

“So, not pancakes” Jonathan says, opening the fridge “plain eggs or French toast?”. Steve just raises an eyebrow at him, crossing his arms on his chest. “French toast, it is” Jonathan says, already at work, looking at him like he is a spoiled child. “Don’t look at me like that” Steve says, pointing at the other with an accusatory finger “we worked hard, we deserve it”. Jonathan raises his hands in defeat, still smiling; “I guess we have next to zero chance of getting fat” he says, moving around in the kitchen like he belongs there – *because he does, because Steve wants him to*. “Where is my breakfast?” Nancy walks in the kitchen in a flowery dress that shows a lot of skin, with her hair still wet – *she is so beautiful, Steve almost can’t take it*. “Almost ready” Jonathan answers, shaking his head. Steve feels so fucking happy these days, Nancy and Jonathan just have that effect on him.

The first week after they all made up, things had still been tense: not awkward, but like neither of them knew where the line was – if he could still put his hand of Jonathan’s shoulder without it being weird; or if having lunch with just Nancy could be interpreted as making a move. But then things started to ease up, Steve decided to stop analyzing every interaction between them and just enjoy their company: he is still confused as hell about whatever happened that morning, but he wasn’t going to let it take Nancy and Jonathan from him. So they spent time together, an awful lot of time, and just rolled

with it – *even if sometimes Steve caught himself staring at Nancy's thighs, or leaving his hand on Jonathan's shoulder a bit longer than normal.*

“You two” Jonathan says, not turning around “set the table, instead of just sitting on your asses”. “Yes, sir” Steve says; and Jonathan hits him with the rag, for it. Nancy laughs, but she stays put, sitting on the kitchen table with her legs hanging. Steve puts his hands on his hips, and raises an eyebrow at her “If you're not going to help, at least get down”. She just shrugs, and hops down; and then sits on the counter next to Jonathan. “Oh, I see” Steve says, getting plates and cutlery “this is how it works, isn't it? We work and you just stay there, doing nothing”. “Yes” Nancy says, unruffled “there's already two of you at work, I'm sure you'll be fine without my help”; she smiles at them in turns, her eyes challenging. “You're right” Jonathan says – and Steve is ready to scream at him in betrayal “Next time, I'm taking a break”.

Nancy's eyes widen in horror, and she looks at Steve clearly asking for help - Nancy can't cook to save her life and Steve isn't much better: if Jonathan quits, they're screwed. “Jonathan” she says, her tone pleading. “Jon” Steve says, putting an hand on Jonathan's shoulder “sweet, generous, talented Jon”; he makes him turn towards him, and looks in his eyes “You want us to starve? Or burn the house down? You never would, I know a good men like you never could”. Jonathan laughs at that, laud and unapologetically – *that laugh is amazing*, Steve can't help but notice, *just as rare as it is beautiful*. Steve is kind of proud that he did that, that he is able to paint Jonathan's face with so much happiness – Steve catches Nancy looking at Jonathan too, he will deny that the fondness he sees in her eyes is probably mirroring his own.

Steve is not sure about how things are between Jonathan and Nancy: even when he knew for sure they were a couple, it would have been difficult to guess it – they held hands, Nancy kissed Jonathan on the cheek sometimes; but he guessed they just left their closeness for when he wasn't with them. They stopped holding hands in front of him, and there haven't been any more cheek kisses; but they could easily still be together – *he doesn't know how he feels about that honestly, so he just avoids thinking about it.*

“You idiots” Jonathan says, as he brings the food to the table “you'll

need to learn, one day or another". "And we will" Nancy says, taking a sit "in the future, probably". The table in the kitchen is round and very small, Steve supposes it was meant more as additional working space when cooking; the large one in the dining room, with heavy chairs all round it, was meant for the actual eating: Steve barely remembers last time he ate with his family at either of them, but he is getting quite fond of the small one. Steve takes the first bite, and literally moans into it "why would we ever want to learn, if you are this good?" – Nancy nods enthusiastically, too busy eating.

"That's it" Jonathan says, shaking his head "I'm teaching you, you two need at least the basic survival skills". Steve groans, banging his head on the table. "If you're sure" Nancy says, looking at Jonathan "but I can't assure the safety of the house, or anyone inside it". Jonathan rolls his eyes at her, biting into his toast. These days Steve is barely home, that's not new; but when he is at home, he almost doesn't recognize it: Jonathan is cooking, and Nancy is in the shower; Jonathan is putting music on and Nancy is sprawled on the couch; Jonathan and Nancy are sitting on the porch, keeping him company while he smokes - *The perpetually empty house isn't so empty these days. Steve just wants these days to never end.*

Jonathan has worked at the diner for years, he liked it there – as much as anyone could like waiting tables, wiping floors and washing dishes; but it's a job, and money are always tight. In the last month, like anything else in his life, it changed: Nancy and Steve started doing homework there while he works, keeping him updated if there aren't many costumers. After they all made up, they seem to constantly revolve around each other; they spend so much time together that Jonathan is starting to forget how being alone feels – *and yes, it's scary how much he cares for them, how losing them for barely a week made him realize how important they actually are for him.*

"Jon! Guess who got a B in math?" Steve enters the diner like he owns it and sits on one the stools, right where Jonathan is wiping the counter. "Congrats" Jonathan smiles at him, catching his eyes – *he*

hasn't been able to do that for days even after they had made up, the memory of what happened between them too fresh in his mind. "You and Nance, men" Steve says, looking at the menu even if he probably knows it by heart at this point "I swear I get whatever you're saying ten times better than I do in class, you should consider a teaching career". Jonathan steps out from behind the counter, mop in hand; it's going to get really busy for half an hour and then things will calm down again till the end of his shift - crowds and spilled cola on the floor don't mesh well in his experience. "You would understand just as much, if you only bothered with actually listening to the teachers" Jonathan gives Steve a stern look, he has studied with him enough to know that he is not at all stupid: he just isn't interested in actually studying, and that it's completely understandable from Jonathan perspective; he just wishes Steve did at least as much what he needs to graduate: he knows he cares about that no matter what he says.

Steve just shrugs, and smirks at him – *that smirk, Jonathan thinks bitterly, it's unfair how much he loves it and hates it at the same time.* "Nance will be here any minute" Steve says, getting up from the stool "better claim the table before the afternoon crowd comes in, we're doing chemistry today". Jonathan groans at that, but nods; he hates chemistry with a passion, never made sense for him. Steve grabs his shoulder, squeezing it for a second, while he gets to their usual table – after what happened, Jonathan was sure the casual touching would stop; and for almost a week after they made up, it did: then Steve just started grabbing his shoulders again, or the nape of his neck; or putting an hand on Nancy's upper arm, sometimes between her shoulder blades. After awhile, Nancy started picking up on Steve's casual touching tendencies: her hands always fall on their chests, her legs in their laps when they're all on the couch, sometimes on their wrists – *she wants to hold their hands, Jonathan thinks, but she is probably scared of overstepping the boundary.*

"Hey, guys" Nancy says, entering the diner with her arms full of books; she gives Jonathan a smile, and then waves at Steve, already sitting at their table, the closer one to the kitchens. It's probably the worst table in the whole place, because it's close to the working personal; Steve claimed it theirs for the same reason, to be close to Jonathan while he is working. "Your shift ends right after the busy hour? Or are you doing dishes?" Nancy asks, looking up at him "I

know you need to catch up with chemistry, it's either today or tomorrow: don't try to run away". "I know" Jonathan huffs, his shoulders dropping "I'm finished in an hour; go sit down, I'll come in a second to take your orders". "Good" Nancy nods, looking more proud than she should "and don't bother with the orders, we'll just wait for you" – Jonathan shakes his head in disbelief watching her walk to the table, and catches Steve's gaze for a second, whose shrugging at him with a bright smile - *Jonathan loves how Steve understands it, how he knows what it feels like to love Nancy Wheeler like they do*. Nancy sits down and opens the books in front of them, she laughs loudly when Steve bangs his head on the table in response – Nancy knows how it feels like, to look at Steve Harrington and not being able to stop a smile.

In the next hour the diner fills up and then empties down slowly and Jonathan goes on with his work mechanically, his mind elsewhere; or, better, focused on two people sitting in a particular table in that diner. He developed some photos today at school, during a free period that he didn't share with either of them – they started hanging out in the darkroom when he works on his photos after school, so it was actually unexpected for Jonathan to be there alone. But, for once, Jonathan is glad they weren't: they wouldn't have been able to hide much, if they saw them.

Nancy and Steve sprawled on the grass in the clearing, looking up at him and laughing – he took that one a week ago, after training. Nancy looking at Steve with a fond smile and Steve winking at the camera; Steve getting up, a hand stretched towards him – Steve demanded Jonathan teach him how to use the camera, and then started taking photos of him. Jonathan trying to hide a shy smile; Jonathan looking at Steve and blushing; Jonathan looking at Nancy with a helpless smile – Jonathan blushed when he saw those pictures of himself printed: from the look in his eyes to the smile on his face, everything spoke of those words they refused to say out loud. The side of Steve's face, completely out of focus; Nancy still sitting on down and Jonathan standing beside her, almost in focus behind Steve's shoulder – he was trying to take a photo of the three of them, claiming it was unfair they didn't have one already. Steve finally visible, finally on focus, smiling like an idiot; Nancy smiling pressed on his side and Jonathan pressed against Nancy, laughing and looking at them – It was the third try, and it wasn't a perfect

photo at all: but it was the three of them, and their eyes were telling everything they refused to voice. He made three copies, without thinking; they are sitting in his bag, between books and notes.

“Finally” Steve said, when Jonathan sat beside him at the end of his shift “we are meant to be comrades, Jon; and yet, you made me face this terrible fate alone for centuries”. Jonathan shakes his head, not even bothering to hide his smile; he sees Nancy trying to hide hers, with no better result. “It’s been an hour” he says, frowning at Steve “at best”. Nancy snorts, shaking her head in clear amusement; she sends Jonathan a fond look, *see what I have to put up with*. “I think we need a break” Steve says, putting his hands up to stop Nancy’s incoming protests “milkshakes, on me; and then we go back to work: we can’t fight this battle on an empty stomach”. “Deal” Nancy huffs, in mock annoyance “but we have to cover at least another chapter today”. Steve nods enthusiastically, and goes to wave the waiter over – Jonathan stops him with an hand on his wrist, *maybe he is picking up his habits too*. “One chocolate, one vanilla and one strawberry” Jonathan says, looking at Steve “I already put the order in, they’re probably on their way”. Steve’s eyes widen, and then a big smile appears on his face “you know us so well, Jon”. Steve’s eyes were telling him the same thing they did in the photos; Jonathan turned to Nancy, and so were hers – Jonathan just shrugs: *he’ll show them the photos one day, when they’re ready*.

The gym is as loud as usual, during the basketball practice; Nancy and Jonathan are sitting quietly on the stands, waiting for Steve – they started watching practice after they made up, partly because they wanted to keep pressure on Billy: Nancy wanted that asshole to know they had Steve’s back, even if they weren’t physically there. Jonathan has his camera held high, always pointed at Steve; and Nancy has her history notes in her lap, even if she isn’t actually paying any attention to them: she is feeling really good lately, probably because all three of them are basically joined to the hip. At the diner, at Steve’s house for breakfast on Saturdays, for training, in the darkroom, in the library, doing homework in her room, in the

gym, and also most of the evenings for no apparent reason: they are spending more time together than separated, and Nancy loves it.

Steve skips toward them, sweaty and smirking “I’m taking a shower, give me fifteen”. Nancy scoffs, smiling playfully at him “You’re not doing your hair, then”. Steve rolls his eyes and smiles at her, glaring a bit at Jonathan’s smirk “You two should feel honored, I wouldn’t delay my hair routine just for anyone”. Jonathan smiles widely, looking at Steve from behind his bangs “thank you?”; he says, purposefully making it sound like a question. Steve snorts at him, still smiling, and runs backwards to the showers – Nancy can see Jonathan’s shy smile, as he shakes his head in amusement. *Nancy is so fucking happy her chest could explode with it*; she never wants to leave Jonathan and Steve again. “You don’t have work today, do you?” Nancy asks, putting her notes back in her bag. “I have a shift at six” Jonathan says, putting the camera carefully around his neck “but before then, I don’t have any plans”. Nancy smiles widely at him: it still seemed impossible for her that Jonathan Byers, closed off and shy, wanted to spend so much time with them – they haven’t had sex since *that morning*, *Nancy doesn’t even know if they are together now*: they are swimming in this gray area, standing just behind the line between friendship and something else, all three of them.

“Good” Nancy says, getting up from the stands “any suggestions?” – Jonathan shrugs, getting up too; “not really, but I’m sure Steve will think of something” he says, with a fond smile. *The smile that appears on Jonathan’s face when Steve is concerned*, Nancy thinks, *is something that she’ll never get tired of* – Nothing really changed for Nancy, after everything that happened between the three of them: her stomach still drops every time they look at her; a familiar wetness still pools between her thighs every time they are a little too close to her *and* to each other; her hands still hitch to take theirs, almost every moment she spends with them – *she wants to touch them constantly*: she actually needs to pay attention to it, in case her hands step over the line when she is not paying attention. Nancy still wants them, and she cares for them even more, now that she knows how much it would suck to be without them; but she is determined to stick to the plan this time: she is going to enjoy what they have, no matter her crazy fantasies; because it’s not worth risking their closeness for something unimportant like sex – *her resolve is tested every time*

Jonathan leans into her, every time Steve touches her skin, every time the boys look into each other's eyes: still, Nancy Wheeler can take it.

"Nance, Jon" Steve says, reemerging from the showers smiling and with wet hair "how do you feel about ice cream?"; he drapes an arm around Jonathan's shoulders as he walks, his other arm going around her waist – *Nancy can almost see the line, they're walking right on it.* "Of course" Jonathan snorts, giving Nancy a meaningful look "Will mentioned that you would take them". Steve smiles at them, trying to look innocent "They keep trying to make me join in on game night, I have to make up for it". Nancy laughs at that, Steve is unbelievable sometimes "so you're going to bankrupt your parents on ice creams and God knows what else?". Steve shakes his head, a soft smile on his lips "I would do it anyway, really; it just gives me a good excuse" – Nancy loves how fiercely protective he is of the kids; *she would like to bask in the pureness of the sentiment, if Steve's hand on her hip wasn't making her skin burn.* "And" Jonathan says, trying not to laugh "you really don't want to make the effort to learn how to play D&D" – Steve laughs along with him, his arms tightening around them both for a second "No, I really don't". *They're walking too close to the edge, it would take less than a step to cross the line. Nancy won't snap, not this time.*

"Alright" Jonathan says, when they're already in the parking lot "to the middle school?"; "You're the best" Steve answers, smiling brightly "I really wasn't looking forward to the double trip". Jonathan just shakes his head and gets in the car, Nancy plopping beside him in the passenger sit; he starts the car and Nancy turns the radio on. Jonathan groans when one of Steve's disco mix tapes starts playing , and Nancy just laughs loudly at that – *They fit so perfectly, all three of them. Nancy won't risk it, not again.* "That idiot" Jonathan groans, trying and failing not to smile "I should have never let him mess with mix tapes, to start with" – Nancy laughs again: she will have the time of her life when the boys find out it was her that switched the tapes in their cars, both of them; she can imagine how much groaning is doing Steve, in his own car listening to Jonathan's depressing songs, as he calls them. *Nancy Wheeler wants Jonathan Byers and Steve Harrington in her life, no matter how or under what label: she is never letting go of them.*

Steve is high, very very high; it's the night before Nancy's birthday and the clearing the most astonishing thing he's ever laid eyes on: silent and calm, with a thousand stars shining above it – weed makes him poetic apparently, don't judge; "I love you, guys" and sentimental, apparently. They are all lying on the grass, with Nancy between them; looking up at the beautiful stars above them; there will be a little party for Nancy's birthday at the Wheelers' house tomorrow, but Steve wanted to do something just for the three of them. When he told Jon, he proposed a midnight escapade; the weed was Steve's idea, since Nancy told him she wanted to try it once, and Jon got it for them. "Me, too" Nancy's voice is soft, the smile on her lips blinding "so much". Jonathan shifts, getting on his side to face them; "I have something for you" he says, sounding uncertain. "Hey!" Steve says, trying to make his eyes focus on Jonathan's face "we said we'll wait tomorrow for the gifts". Jonathan smiles at him, and he grabs his bag from behind them "It's not a birthday present, and it's for you too".

Steve jumps at that, sitting up to face Jonathan, smiling like an idiot; he never actually cared for presents, but the idea of receiving something from Jonathan thrills him. "I, just" Jonathan has what looks like photos in his hands, and he looks nervous; "just, here" he hands them a photo each, bowing his head down. It's pretty dark, so Steve grabs the lighter from his pocket to look at it properly: *It's the three of them, in that same clearing, pressed against each other, with big smiles on their faces and love in their eyes* – he remembers that photo, he took it. He looks up at Jonathan immediately, and he notices Nancy doing the same: Jonathan is gazing at them sheepishly, almost certainly blushing – *once Jon told him that photos can't lie, or something like that: they are smiling, they are happy, they are together*. It takes another moment for Steve's mind to click: They are together. He bursts out laughing, and it sounds just a little bit hysterical; *they are already together*, he can't believe neither of them figured it out yet.

When he finally stops laughing, they are looking at him like he has finally gone mad: but really, they couldn't not see it. "Nance" he says,

smiling because tonight everything is possible “look at it, just look at it” – Nancy raises an eyebrow and grabs his lighter, her cheeks color a bit while she watches the photo. “Jon” he says, looking at the nervous boy straight in the eyes “It’s already happening!”. Jonathan’s eyes widen, and Steve can see him blush even in the dark; Steve, probably thanks to the combination of weed and euphoria, doesn’t think: he grubs the sides of Jonathan’s face, and kisses him on the lips. It’s a quick kiss, but Jonathan looks petrified; Steve turns to Nancy, and she looks kind of panicked too. “We said” Steve says, still smiling because he knows he is right “we could only move forward, and we did!”. Nancy and Jonathan are looking at him like he is crazy, and still blushing – Jonathan’s fingers are on his own lips, tempting Steve in a way he just realized can exist. “Guys!” he has their eyes focused on him only, he almost feels giddy “we’re already dating!”. Nancy eyes go comically wide, then she looks horrified for a second, and then she laughs loudly – Jonathan looks shocked, and he is sitting so still he could be made of stone.

“Okay” says Nancy, between laughs “explain, Steve”. “What is there to explain?” Steve is confused, there’s nothing more to say “I love you two, I spend all my time with you two, I talk about my fears with you two, I feel like I never have to hide anything from you two, we have each other’s backs; and I’m pretty sure both of you feel the same: we’re already together”. Nancy laughs again, probably because of the weed – Nancy doesn’t usually likes to talk about feelings, so she probably wouldn’t be taking this so lightly any other time. “But” Jonathan says, his serious gaze glued on Steve’s “we aren’t”. “Yes!” Steve even points at him, smiling again “we are! Add some kissing and then some, and we are dating: we are dating like in middle school!”. “Steve” Jonathan sounds so serious Steve’s smile almost falters “we are not”; Jonathan gives him a sad smile “I love you two too, and I feel at home with you, and I can be honest with you; but we aren’t: there’s three of us, and we are guys”.

Steve frowns, he doesn’t like this: he feels happy with them, happier that he has ever been. They care about him, they look after him; he can be himself with them and they don’t judge him. “So?” Steve says; he feels the weed induced courage slip, he has to ride it till he can: he turns to Nancy, and looks into her eyes – she looks scared, but also hopeful; she keeps biting her lips. “Nance, do you want us? Like, date

both of us?”. Nancy’s eyes widen even more, and she looks horrified again; she hides her face in her hand, and then nods – Steve turns back to Jonathan, who’s looking at Nancy with the same hopeful, but scared eyes. “Jon?” Steve says, more serious than he has ever been “do you?”. Jonathan looks at him, suddenly frowning. “Do you? Steve, do you really want this: do you want to share Nancy? Do you want to kiss me? Do you want to have sex with me?” he turns to Nancy, almost angry “do you? You’ll be okay with the two of us having sex? You are ready to face whatever happens if people found out?”.

Steve, and this time it’s all his natural recklessness, kisses him again. Jonathan tries to push him away, with his hands on Steve’s chest. Steve doesn’t let him, he just kisses him harder; and after a moment, he feels Jonathan respond to the kiss: their second kiss is slower than the first, but just as passionate; with a lot of teeth and tongue. When their lips part, Steve presses his forehead on Jonathan “I do” – Steve is sure that hadn’t he been high when he had the revelation, he would have run from it immediately: the look on Jonathan’s face in that moment, makes him want to thank weed so much. “Really?” Jonathan asks, still sounding uncertain. Steve just smiles at him and turns to Nancy; he raises an eyebrow at her, in a silent question. Nancy laughs again, looking like she can’t believe this is actually happening; “Really” she says, touching her forehead with theirs. *Steve kisses her, and then she kisses Jonathan; and then Jonathan is kissing him: they can just move forward, together.*

Notes for the Chapter:

Hi, people! So, the next chapter will be the last & I learned that I’m definitely not good at keeping up with schedule. That said, I feel like I should put an Excessive Use on Cursive tag on this fic, so I should probably correct this habit of mine. Thank you all for reading (and leaving comments, and kudos and bookmarking this), I’ll add the last chapter as soon as I can.

7. Chapter 7

Jonathan hears Steve's car approaching the Byers' house before he even sees it, and he can't help the shiver that goes down his spine; it's his first day off since they got together, and it's also the first time they have an house all to themselves – Steve's house is always empty, but since Nancy's birthday their schedules have been full with work, and school, and the kids, and whatever: this is the first time they have both privacy and time on their side, and Jonathan can't think about what could happen between them without blushing. They have been making out, all three of them, incessantly; and their hands have been doing some wondering around: but that is as far as Jonathan would go, parked in the clearing in the morning, or in Nancy's room with her mother downstairs – and, well: this situation still seems more than a little bit unreal to Jonathan and he is still surprised every time Steve kisses him, so he doesn't mind taking it slow. When they get out of the car, Jonathan is waiting for them at the door.

"Hey" Nancy says as she reaches him, taking his hand and kissing him; she smiles into it, when he bites her lips. "So, we're alone?" Steve's voice makes him laugh into the kiss, he learned fast how to read Jonathan in these situations – Jonathan was incredibly private about relationships even when it was just him and Nancy, now that there's three of them he is not taking any chances. "then I want my hello-kiss, too" Steve says, grabbing Jonathan behind his neck as soon as he separates from Nancy – Jonathan's smile slips away as soon as Steve's tongue touches his lips: this is very far from his idea of hello kiss. On the contrary, the way Steve devours his mouth makes him go weak in the knees, and very hard in other places, so he is not complaining. "God" Steve pants, breathing on Jonathan's wet lips "tell me we have at least more than an hour, all this no touching thing is giving me blue balls". Jonathan laughs at that, forgetting what he was so nervous about for a second; he sees Nancy smiling, but also biting her lips furiously. "Nobody will be here for hours" Jonathan says, stepping into the house "so?"; he waits for Steve and Nancy to follow him inside and then he locks the door, looking at them while it clicks shut.

"Oh" Nancy says, sounding breathy and flustered – Steve is grinning

madly, but also fidgeting quite a bit. *They are just are nervous as he is, they are in this together:* Jonathan has nothing to worry about. He takes Nancy's hand, and then Steve's; and he walks to his bedroom – his cheeks are burning: nervous or not, it's still an embarrassing situation. He closes the door of his room too, even locks it; he turns around and they are still blushing and fidgeting, standing close to the bed but not touching it. "Okay" Steve says, taking a deep breath; he looks at Jonathan, and then Nancy, and loses his shirt – Jonathan hears Nancy's gasp, and he has to do his best not to cover his face in embarrassment. Nancy looks at them both for a moment, and then she pulls her flowery summer dress over her head; uncovering her beautiful, creamy skin almost entirely. "Shit" Jonathan looks away from Nancy, hearing Steve's words – Steve looks at him immediately, smirking: *Nancy Wheeler is something else* - Jonathan loves that Steve gets that as he does. "Come on, Jon" Steve says, looking at his shirt "I want to see those muscles" – Jonathan flushes immediately. *Stupid smirking shirtless Steve Harrington will be the death of him.* Jonathan gets rid of his own shirt, and he can feel his blush reach his chest; their gazes burn on his skin and he loves it.

"Well" Nancy says, her pupils already blown wide "I think you two still have some catching up to do"; she signals to her body, covered only by her frilly pink underwear – Jonathan missed seeing her like this, necked and aroused, almost impatient for something to happen. "Right" Steve says, still smirking; but his ears are a little red, and he is instinctively trying to hide the bulge in his pants with his hands – Jonathan blushes even more noticing that, his own pants tightening up even more. Jonathan breathes in deeply, and takes the first step this time; he unbuttons his pants and pulls them down, his gaze suddenly glued to the floor. "Shit" Steve's voice is breathier than before, full of arousal and maybe awe; it makes Jonathan look up immediately: Nancy is looking at Steve's face, her gaze flicking to Jonathan's body every few seconds – Steve's eyes are glued on Jonathan's underwear, and he is biting his lips unconsciously. Jonathan is going to die from embarrassment, he can feel it crawling in his bones; but he is also never been more aroused in his life, with Nancy and Steve looking at him like that.

"Your turn" Jonathan is surprised he is even able to speak, but the look in Steve's eyes makes it worth it. Steve nods, and gets rid of his

own pants - Jonathan lets his gaze wonder on the other's body and, God: *Steve Harrington is something else too*. "Jesus" Nancy sounds almost breathless now, and even more aroused "If we keep this peace we'll need more than a few hours, I'm dying here" – Jonathan and Steve laugh loudly at that, all of this is just too surreal. "Come on, you two" Nancy walks to the bed, and sits carefully on the edge of it "come here"; she holds her hands out to them, with a soft smile on her lips – Jonathan and Steve take them immediately, almost unconsciously; and they smile at each other right after: *neither of them has ever been able to resist Nancy Wheeler, after all*.

A part of Steve's mind can't believe this is actually happening, and not just the part where they are all in their underwear, making out on Jonathan's bed: when his mind cleared out, after his revelation, he experienced the well deserved freak out Steve knew was coming; his mind racing from thought to thought trying to make sense of what happened between them. And after a couple of beers, some tears and probably three sandwiches, he reached the final answer: *he wanted Nancy and Jonathan, he loved Nancy and Jonathan; and if they wanted him too, he wasn't going to run from it*. Wanting a guy, that way, wasn't easy to accept; and neither was wanting to be with two people at the same time, or wanting to share Nancy apparently: but Steve wanted it all, it made him happy – so, yeah. He was done fighting it. Still, the making out, *all three of them, in a bed*, is a new kind of nerve-wrecking experience.

Nancy is laying on the bed between them, a panting beautiful mess of flushed skin and ruffled hair; and Steve looks up at Jonathan, who's devouring her mouth like a starved man – Jonathan is different than what Steve expected, like the shy boy leaves the place to someone else entirely: it's still the same careful and caring Jon he knows, put a bit more reckless; showing a passion and restlessness Steve doesn't see every day. Steve wants to be devoured like that too, he wants to devour him: he moves from Nancy's neck to Jonathan's almost unconsciously. It's not the time for over-thinking. Jonathan moans against Nancy's lips, he bits them when Steve sucks behind his ear;

his face is quite flushed, and the muscles on his shoulders are jumping constantly – Steve doesn't resist the urge to bite them, and he is rewarded by a deep grunt that makes him shiver. "Wait" Steve stills immediately at Nancy's words, almost scared "we need a game plan". Jon laughs at that, but Steve is still a bit stunned – "like" Nancy continues, now smiling at them "this is going to end before we're even completely naked if we go on like this, and you know it. So, what do you want to do?"; she looks at them in turn, her smile turning into a teasing smirk.

"Well" Steve, as usual, is talking before he even realizes "I definitely want to get you off, and watch Jon get you off; and I probably want to get Jon off, but you'll have to walk me through that, because the specifics blow up my mind". This time is Nancy that laughs, like she doesn't already know he likes to talk during sex – but he didn't think he would have been able to, since the nerves are killing him. "*Blow up your mind?*" Jonathan's voice is almost a whisper, breathier and deeper than normal – it turns Steve on incredibly, they need to make him talk more. "You" Steve swallows, arousal more than nerves choking him "You don't? Like, watching I can still wrap my mind around; but I have to stop thinking about *doing* before ...".

Jonathan smirks at that, getting closer to Steve; he feels his breath on his lips and a hand dangerously up on his thigh "You don't have to stop". Jonathan's lips press on his just as his hand touches his barely covered cock, Steve basically screams into the kiss. He keeps moaning as the other boy's hand starts moving on him, Steve can't wait to see how it feels skin on skin. "God" Nancy's voice makes Jonathan smirk into the kiss, and Steve chooses the moment to part their mouths; "You like it" Steve is talking to Nancy, but his eyes are glued on Jonathan's and his hand is slowly reaching the other boy's pants "watching me and Jon like this, it turns you on". When he finally looks at her, Nancy is smirking; "Oh, yes" she says, as she puts an hand on Steve's, both on Jonathan's clothed cock. Jonathan moans, loud and almost surprised; and then he looks at them, his eyes languid and almost entirely black – Steve doesn't know how he managed to deny the attraction he feels for him, it seems impossible now. Her other hand takes Jonathan's free one and guides it, right into her panties – Steve gasps, he can't stop watching.

“Steve” Jonathan says, looking straight at him - “Jonathan” gasps Nancy, closing her eyes: the hand on his cock isn’t stopping, Steve needs to do something before he cums. “This is going to end quickly, no matter what we do” he says, not even bothering trying to sound embarrassed “let’s get rid of everything, I want to see you”. Nancy laughs and Jonathan smirks, even if he kind of blushes too. Nancy naked is as much of a vision as he remembers, with perky pink nipples and brown curls between her legs; and Jonathan is amazing, covered in muscles but still blushing – he is a bit bigger than Steve, and probably thicker too: Steve loves it in a way he definitely didn’t expect to. He wraps his hand around it immediately, and Nancy’s had joins his second after: Jonathan is moaning, and looking at them in adoration and bare arousal. Jonathan wraps his hand around Steve, skin on skin now; and Nancy’s other hand joins him too – Steve almost feels like fainting, their joined hands working around is cock is too much.

“Steve, Jon” Nancy moans, when Jonathan sucks on her nipple while Steve bites her neck; one hand with Steve’s on Jonathan’s cock, the other with Jonathan’s on Steve’s. “Steve” Jon’s choking up on his name makes him moan too, this is wonderful “I’m going to” – “Yeah” Steve says, moaning and smiling all together “me too”. “Go for it” says Nancy, tightening her grip on their cocks for a second “I want your fingers inside me, next” - The thought of his fingers beside Jon’s, buried inside Nancy’s wetness, makes him cum on the spot. He hears Jonathan’s grunt, and then his cum covers their fingers – Nancy’s soft laugh rings in the room, while Steve is still trying to catch his breath. *And this is just hand-jobs*, Steve thinks almost thrilled.

Nancy is losing her mind, watching Steve cum on their hands and then Jonathan following right after: she is amazed by all of it, that it’s actually happening and it’s not just a guilty fantasy – *they all want this, they want it bad*. “Shit” Jonathan says, with his raspy sex voice; he has a content smile on his face and his eyes are closed, like he can’t believe it either – Steve, for once, hasn’t immediately fallen

asleep; he is watching them, with a dreamy expression “and that was just hand-jobs”. Nancy laughs, her boys are idiots; she is still lying down between them, feeling the warmth of their bodies on her sides. Jonathan’s fingers are writing invisible circles around her navel, he shares a look with Steve before passing the band of her panties – “Well, Nance” Steve says, biting his lips as his hand joins Jonathan’s “we think it’s your turn”. Nancy shivers, if it’s a dream she never wants to be woken up.

“Actually” Jonathan’s voice surprises her, Steve is usually the more talkative one, especially in bed “while your plan is amazing, I would like ...”; he looks at them both for a second, blushing furiously – Nancy loves embarrassed Jonathan, but it kind of surprises her since he seemed to be more at ease than she thought he would be. “What?” asks Steve, looking still amazed and also intrigued; looking at Jonathan in a way that makes Nancy squirm. “I want” Jonathan says, taking a deep breath and closing his eyes “I want to see you two fucking”. Nancy moans out loud, their fingers are still just past the waistband of her panties – “Okay” says Steve, looking more turned on than he should since they came literally minutes ago “but only if I get to watch you two after”. “I want it” the boys look at her as soon as the words are out of her mouth “all of it: first fingers, then one of you two fucks me, then the other”. Steve laughs, his eyes still a black pool of arousal – Jonathan’s breath gets faint for a moment, against her shoulder. “Sure” Steve’s fingers take Jonathan’s, and they reach her core together; for a second Nancy can’t tell them apart, while they caress her wetness.

“Shit, Jon” Nancy knows Steve well enough to recognize his moves, she knows he is going to say something that will make her scream “can you feel how wet she is?”. Nancy moans, and Jonathan moans against her shoulder; Nancy is used to Steve talking in bed, and to the effect it has on her – Jonathan, on the other hand, has still to learn and appreciate that particular talent of Steve; he is in for one hell of a ride, Nancy would know. “Steve” Nancy pants, looking straight in his eyes and then nodding toward Jonathan – Steve smirks at her; he knows exactly what he is doing, to the both of them. “Show me how you do it, Jon” he says, his eyes glued on Jonathan’s “I know you’re good with your hands”. Jonathan groans and bites his lip, as his pointer and middle finger enter her – Steve’s fingers are on her clit,

just adding some pressure: Nancy feels like she is going to faint. They share a quiet look for a second, and then they are kissing; right on top of her face, while their fingers start moving: Nancy starts moaning, probably louder than she ever did; *this is blowing her mind*.

“I love your nipples” Steve says, as his lips part from Jonathan “don’t you, Jon?”; he sucks on her left nipple right after that, forcing another loud moan out of her throat – “You” says Jonathan, biting gently on her right nip “talk way too much”. Steve smirks against her breast, liking around the areola; “you love it” he says, looking first at Jonathan’s eyes and then down his body – Nancy looks too, and obviously Jonathan’s cock is already half hard again: this is better than any fantasy she ever came up with, she loves it all. Their fingers have found a nice rhythm, working in tandem like they have always been doing this – it should stop to be surprising, how well they fit together; but it never ceases to amaze Nancy, or to excite her. “Well, Steve” Jonathan says, his thumb suddenly joining Steve’s fingers on her clit “I have been told that I blow up minds”; he is smirking at Steve, while he bites Nancy’s nipple – Steve knows Jonathan, but he doesn’t know Jonathan in bed: Nancy bets this will affect Steve as much as the talking affected Jonathan, as much as all of it is affecting her.

“That, you do” Steve says, his eyes glossy and lips parted – Jonathan just goes for it: he guides Steve’s fingers inside her panties, inside her; and suddenly she has four fingers inside her, and two different thumbs on her clit. Nancy screams, and pants, and moans; and the guys speed up their movements, and she feels the warmth build up faster and faster. With the hand that is not inside her, Jonathan grabs the back of Steve’s head; he pulls their lips together and then gently pulls on Steve’s hair – Steve moans into the kiss, his fingers moving almost frantically inside her. Jonathan smirks into the kiss, biting his lips and then sucking on his tongue. “Oh, Jon” Nancy feels him shiver at her pants, breathing against Steve’s lips “Steve, I’m almost” – Jonathan’s gaze lands on her face immediately, he has always had a thing for looking at her while she comes. Steve starts biting along Jonathan’s jaw, till his lips brush against the shell of his ear; he bites his lips, and looks at her. “Nancy Wheeler” he says, in a barely audible whisper “isn’t she beautiful, Jon?”. Nancy comes immediately, her lips parting in a silent scream. “You’re idiots” she

says, when she finally catches her breath - They just smile at her, closing her in the warmest hug ever: *Nancy Wheeler, naked in a bed with Jonathan Byers and Steve Harrington, never felt better.*

Steve is on his bed, barely covered from waist down by the sheets, smoking; Nancy is laying beside him, her legs tangled into the sheets, looking into the camera – Jonathan took that photo that afternoon, the first time they all did it. He keeps the copy well hidden in his bedroom drawer; printing it without getting caught had been difficult enough: he really doesn't want anyone to see it, besides of course Nancy and Steve. Steve blushes cutely when he sees it, and Nancy smirks at him teasingly: Jonathan doesn't bother with hiding how much he loves them anymore, he doesn't have to.

Nancy is sprawled on Steve's couch, her legs un in the air – he took that one on a Saturday morning, after training; that morning he took a lot of photos. Steve dancing around in the kitchen, only in his boxers; Nancy sitting on the kitchen counter, laughing beautifully; Steve leaning over Nancy from behind, looking directly into the camera – They were all on his desk, making him smile every time his eyes fall on them; he doesn't hide them, if they're not particularly compromising: he has a feeling both mom and Will would become rather suspicious, if he stopped taking photos of those two.

Nancy on her own bed with a book on her lap, and Steve laying face down beside her – the one is a bit blurry over the edges: Jonathan was laughing while he took it, so he isn't surprised it didn't turn out perfect. Steve frowning at the camera, Nancy laughing in the background; Steve's face, still frowning but closer – at that point Steve took the camera from Jonathan, who decided that he preferred going along with it, than listen to Steve's whine for the next hour. Jonathan's face, in a rather disapproving expression; Nancy laughing, now sprawled on her bed; Jonathan and Nancy, laying side by side on the bed, looking at the camera with love in their eyes; Jonathan leaning against the window, his gaze lost somewhere outside the frame – That last one made Jonathan blush, even more when both Nancy and Steve demanded a copy:

Nancy's is framed, on her desk beside Steve's *model-like one*; Steve's in the back on a comic book, he heard Dustin question him about it once.

Jonathan in the diner, mop in hand and frowning deeply at the camera – his photos were still almost always awful, but Steve seemed to have taken a liking to it. "It's not fair" he said once, even trying to sound serious about it "I get that your talent is behind the camera, but Jon: hiding all that beauty from the world can't be right" – Nancy nodded along with him, smirking teasingly. Jonathan blushed over and over again, every time Steve brought up his alleged beauty; he still didn't see it, but they did. *Jonathan and Nancy, sitting side by side in their booth at the diner, smiling fondly at each other; Jonathan leaning on the diner's counter, Nancy hitting his head with a chemistry book; Nancy looking into the camera teasingly, her hand pretty high on Jonathan's thigh, barely visible under the table* – They went to Steve's not long after that shot, that night had been fun. He took the photos at Steve's house after he developed them, since they already had a study date planned: Jonathan hasn't seen them since.

Nancy kissing Steve, in the clearing, with the sun shining on their sweaty skin – Nancy stated she wanted a kiss photo with each of them, and of them: Jonathan would have fought it, since it was a rather risky move; but Steve had his happiest smile on, and he couldn't resist that. *Nancy kissing Jonathan, with her arms draped on his shoulders; Jonathan and Steve kissing, with Steve's hand on Jonathan's arm and Jonathan's hand in Steve's hair* – at the end, Jonathan had to make triple copies of those; he made them promise to hid them properly, like he did with anything too incriminating.

Steve with the kids, all standing to his sides and actually posing for it – it was Dustin's idea, and Jonathan had been more than welcome to go along with it: Steve had an hand on Max and Dustin's heads, who were standing directly beside him; and the smile on his face was the fondest, sappiest thing Jonathan has ever seen. He loved that photo, and he loved it even more when he saw it in Steve's bedroom: framed and hanging on the wall right above his bedside drawer. *Nancy and Mike Wheeler, sitting at the table in the exact same position, with the exact same frown* – Jonathan loved that one too, he and Will had laughed at it for weeks. When Steve asked for a photo of the Byers

Brothers, he understood his error: he and Will ended up side by side, both of their shoulders tight and both looking at the camera from behind their hairs. “Byers” Steve said, smiling at them both “so pretty, and still so shy” – Jonathan punched him in the arm for that, even if both his and Will’s face were basically on fire.

Nancy Wheeler on Steve’s bed, laughing and rolling onto it; Steve shirtless and wet, with only a towel covering him – given the premises, Jonathan could have guessed it wasn’t going to be an innocent Saturday morning; but he doesn’t regret keeping the camera working, even if he will have to leave the country if anyone ever saw them: *Nancy in her underwear, barely visible under Steve’s naked back; Steve’s ass, with Nancy’s hand grabbing a cheek; Steve smirking at the camera, his face pressed to the side of Nancy’s breast.* Jonathan feels so embarrassed and so turned on by those, when he showed them to the other two he was sure his skin was going to burn away: they liked them, a lot. *Nancy straddling his hips, Steve standing beside her; Nancy holding his hand while she comes, Steve biting on her shoulder from behind her; Steve and Nancy on their knees, looking up at the camera* – They actually asked for those, almost planning the setting for them: Jonathan loves them so much, wants them so fucking much.

Jonathan takes so many photos these days, and he loves all of them: *Nancy and Steve at home, in the clearing, in the car, at school, with the kids, alone, dressed, naked, looking at him, looking away* – Jonathan loves them all, he loves them. His favorite is the one that Steve took that time at the clearing, before they even started *being together*; the one *where Steve is smiling like an idiot with Nancy pressed on his side, and Jonathan smiling quietly close to Nancy.* That photo, after all, is what made Steve realize that *they were already dating*: Jonathan loved it in a special way. Nancy had her copy in her bedroom, sitting on her bedside drawer; and she looked at it with the same gratitude Jonathan felt for it – Steve framed his too, he hanged it right above the one with the kids; “I love those” he said once, while they were in bed with him “they keep the nightmares away, when you’re not here with me”. Jonathan keeps his copy in his pocket, folded in a way that a photo never should; always there, along with his lighter: *people change in order to survive what life throws at them, Jonathan thinks, but it doesn’t have to be a bad thing: They will change, again and again, but they will change together.*

Notes for the Chapter:

Finally, my work is done! Honestly, at this point my relationship with this fic is ambivalent: I love every word of it, but at the same time I don't ever want to see it again. I'm definitely not cut for long things, it drains me. That said, I hope you like the ending & thanks to anyone that left a comment, kudos or simply choose to find the time to read: thank you, really.